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**The reported incidence of domestic
violence in pregnancy:
Interrelationships with substance use
and birthweight**

Cornelia Adriana Roodt

2003

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pregnancy: Interrelationships with substance use and
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requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Midwifery
at Massey University,
Palmerston North: New Zealand.

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Abstract

In a prospective non-experimental design, the purpose of the study was to answer the question of what the incidence of domestic violence would be in a cohort of pregnant Waikato women aged 18 years and older. Two hypotheses were included for testing, which were a) domestic violence by itself during pregnancy is associated with lower birthweights and b) domestic violence in combination with substance use during pregnancy are associated with lower birthweights.

Twelve midwives participated as interviewers and recruited 105 women to the study. Two research instruments were used. The Abuse Assessment Screen (AAS), a reliable five-question abuse-focused screen and a questionnaire to collect demographic data and substance use habits. The AAS was administered in a personal interview by the LMC and the questionnaire was self-administered. Data was to be collected from each participant on three occasions. However, the research tools were administered three times in only 26.6% (n=28) of cases.

Data was analysed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 10). The following findings emerged:

- The reported incidence of domestic violence during pregnancy was found to be 7.8% in a Waikato cohort of 105 women aged 18 years and older.
- Both hypotheses were rejected based on statistical t-tests
- Historic and recent abuse are strongly associated with abuse during pregnancy.
- Women who disclosed historic abuse are significantly more likely to smoke
- Women who smoke are significantly more likely to have lower birthweight babies.

The multiple limitations of the study precluded the ability to extrapolate the findings nationally. This study merely opened the door on the issues of abuse during pregnancy and its sequelae in one New Zealand context.

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