

## Health system can do more to address violence against women: researcher

### *Better training and education critical for front-line staff caring for victims of violence*

TORONTO, ON, Dec. 5, 2014 Healthcare providers need to better train and educate front-line staff on responding to and caring for victims of violence to help curb a leading public health concern, said Women's College Hospital researcher Dr. Janice Du Mont at an event commemorating the 1989 École Polytechnique Massacre.

According to Statistics Canada, an estimated one in two women over the age of 16 has been a victim of physical or sexual violence. While healthcare providers are often the first point of contact for survivors, less than one in three women disclose their experience to a doctor or nurse.

"What we have learned is that the health sector must play a key role in preventing violence against women," said Du Mont. "Healthcare providers can create an environment that helps women disclose that they have experienced violence and to understand that what they are reporting is abuse. Our response must include respectful compassionate care and empathetic listening."

Citing recent published research in the journal *The Lancet*, Du Mont noted incorporating education about violence against women into medical, nursing and public health curricula is critical in responding to the human rights issue.

Du Mont, along with Women's College Hospital's Sheila Macdonald and Dr. Robin Mason, are currently developing sexual assault online curricula that teach emergency department staff and healthcare providers in other clinical settings how to more appropriately respond to sexual assault survivors. To view one example, please click [here](#).

"We must do everything we can to continue the dialogue and to address the societal attitudes and behaviours that normalize violence against women," said WCH president and CEO Marilyn Emery. "Be it domestic violence, sexual assault or physical abuse, we need to keep raising awareness, not only to honour the victims and survivors but to create a wide reaching movement that will help us end these horrific crimes."

Emery, made the remarks at a candlelight ceremony marking the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, a day established to commemorate the young women killed at École Polytechnique on Dec. 6, 1989.

One day earlier, the provincial government announced the launch of a public education campaign and a package of initiatives to respond to violence against women. Premier Kathleen Wynne committed to improving government caucus policies and procedures, creating a standing Roundtable on Violence Against Women and improved support for victims of sexual violence.

At Women's College Hospital, the [Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Care Centre](#), provides emergency care, support and counseling for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. Today, the team is mobile, going directly to victims of violence to provide care in hospitals across the GTA.

"By providing these informed and comprehensive health services for victims of violence and by continuing to challenge discriminatory behaviours and social norms, we can work towards eliminating violence against women," said Du Mont.

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**Women's College Hospital** ([www.womenscollegehospital.ca](http://www.womenscollegehospital.ca)) is advancing the health of women and improving healthcare options for all by delivering innovative models of ambulatory care. Fully affiliated with the University of Toronto, the hospital is Canada's leading academic, ambulatory hospital and a world leader in women's health. With more than 800 physicians, nurses and health professionals, the hospital offers a range of specialized clinics and programs that are bridging the gaps in the health system. Women's College Hospital is helping to keep people out of hospital by being at the forefront of cutting-edge research, diagnosis and treatment that will help prevent illness and enable patients to manage their health conditions. This healthcare enables Canadians to live healthier, more independent lives. At the Women's College Research Institute, scientists combine science and patient care to develop innovative solutions to today's greatest health challenges.

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