

The “3rd National Course on Violence Against Women and Role of Health Care Providers” was held from 13-21 January 2009 and organized by the Centre for Enquiry into Health & Allied Themes (CEHAT) in Mumbai, India. Eram Cooper and Shuborna Camellia, researchers from the James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University attended the workshop.

Anusandhan Trust and its health research institution CEHAT, have been involved in investigating violence and in educational campaigns with health professionals and others since 1991.

CEHAT also set up a crisis centre in 2000 for women in a government hospital in Mumbai called Dilassa, where screening and counseling are carried out for violence victims. The participants of the course had the opportunity to visit this centre and observe and learn about different patterns of domestic violence and how it was closely related to assigned gender roles in society.

The course was designed to give a clear understanding of violence against women from a gender, human rights and public health perspective and linked it to the role of health care providers. The course related the issue of violence against women to the perceived gender roles in Indian society.

The course was geared towards changing the attitude of health care providers mainly nurses, matrons and some doctors across all of India. To begin, all the basics about gender orientations were explained and gradually the course revealed the dynamics of violence against women and its causes in Indian communities. The course also underlined the ways of screening violence when a victim comes to the hospital and gave brief demonstrations of counseling of violence victims.

The course also covered the issue of bio ethics and its application in terms of violence cases, medical advice and counseling services. The course also stressed different concepts of gender discrimination, types of violence and concepts of sexual assault on women. We also had a detailed demonstration on how to use a much needed medical rape kit to collect important evidence.

Overall, the course is very useful if one is directly involved with the health service, for researchers the course provided a valuable insight in how to communicate with violence victims and record valuable information.

Eram Cooper