

Legal Ease and Acquaintance Rape

Sexual assault is a serious social problem. One in four females and one in ten males will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime. Sexual assault is any form of unwanted sexual contact. It can range from being kissed or fondled to being forced to have sexual intercourse.

Most sexual assaults are not committed by a stranger in an isolated place, but are committed by someone known to the victim. The attacker may be a date, a friend or a neighbour. This type of sexual assault is commonly referred to as acquaintance rape or date rape.

Although all victims of sexual assault suffer from severe psychological effects, victims of acquaintance rape suffer an added consequence. In stranger rapes, the victim begins to fear unknown people and places. In an acquaintance rape, the victim can develop a fear of the unknown. They feel that there has been a betrayal, that they can no longer trust anyone. They begin to question their judgement, believing that they cannot differentiate between good people and bad people. The victims often blame themselves. They may feel that they have somehow brought it on themselves or failed to do something to avoid it. This is not true. Nobody asks to be sexually assaulted. The only person who is in the wrong is the attacker.

Sexual assault can happen to anyone. To protect yourself there are some steps which you can take. You should always let someone know where you are going and with whom. Remember that drugs and alcohol cloud your judgement and leave you less able to defend yourself. It is also advisable to carry pocket money on you at all times so that you are not dependent on someone for transportation. Incidents of date rape may also be prevented if you maintain control of the situation and appear confident. Do not be afraid to be assertive and always say what you mean. If you mean no, say it!

Sexual assault is a criminal offence and can result in a prison term of up to ten years for the offender. If you have been assaulted, you should always get medical attention. The doctor will check for internal bleeding, sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. It is also important not to destroy any evidence. This means that you should not take a shower until you have been properly examined.

If you are a victim of sexual assault, there are services designed to help you. The Rape Crisis Centre is open seven days of the week and has a 24 hour crisis line. They have counsellors who will talk to you but any decisions to proceed with criminal charges are made by you. These counsellors will also be present for support and will accompany you to the hospital, the police station and to court. On Campus, you may contact counselling Services and the Student Health Centre for support.

Rape Crisis Centre: 454-0437
Counselling Services: 453-4820
Student Health Centre: 453-4837

This column is intended to be used as a guide only. It is not meant to be a replacement for professional legal advice. If you require any additional legal information or legal counselling, please contact a lawyer.

SWAT: AIDS Is Not the Only STD

In the past ten years, the media has focused on AIDS. It is important, however, that we remember some of the other sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) which are more common and may also have serious consequences for the victim.

Chlamydia and gonorrhoea are two very prevalent STD's of sexually active young adults. At UNB 4.3% of students have acknowledged that they have had chlamydia and 0.7% gonorrhoea. After contact with either one of these infections it usually takes between one and three weeks before any symptoms are noticeable. Frequently there are no obvious signs of infection and as a result an infected individual may carry these infections, subsequently unknowingly infecting others. Approximately 50% - 70% of women have no signs of chlamydia or gonorrhoeal infections. Consequently, it is important that women, who have had unprotected intercourse, ask their doctor to test for chlamydia or gonorrhoea during regular PAP tests, since this is not always standard procedure. Obvious symptoms of infection in women are vaginal discharge and/or frequent and painful urination. Other symptoms include slight pain in the abdominal area, backache, and spotting between menstrual periods.

If a woman contracts chlamydia while she is pregnant her chances of delivering a stillbirth or premature baby are greatly increased. Of the surviving babies, 20% - 50% will suffer from eye infections and a very small percentage may develop chlamydia pneumonia shortly after birth. Chlamydial eye infections may also occur in adults when infected vaginal or seminal fluids come into contact with the mucous membranes of the eye. They are usually mild and respond to treatment.

Gonorrhoea may lead to blindness if it is spread to the eye and left untreated. Although this is a very uncommon occurrence among adults, it used to be the leading cause of blindness in newborns, before the introduction of antibiotics. Today eye drops containing silver nitrate are routinely applied to an infant's eyes shortly after birth, preventing gonorrhoeal infection.

Chlamydia and gonorrhoea are responsible for 88 - 90% of all initial cases of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), the leading cause of sterility among women. It involves the swelling and scarring of the fallopian tubes, leading to sterility in 10% of infected women. The majority of women (85%) will not suffer any complications following treatment of an initial episode of PID. But, half of those who have a second episode will become infertile. Each successive occurrence of PID drastically reduces the chances of bearing children.

Another consequence of PID is an increased incidence of ectopic pregnancy, which account for 11% of maternal deaths. Women who have had an ectopic pregnancy are much more likely to have another in the future, or to become infertile.

Approximately 30% of males infected with chlamydia or gonorrhoea have no symptoms. The majority of infected males however, may have symptoms such as: a milky or bloody discharge accompanied by mildly painful urination, pain during intercourse, swollen glands, as well as pain in the testes and abdominal area. A few men suffer from complications such as narrowing of the urethra and arthritis. In fact, the greatest risk of any male infected with either one of these diseases is the possible transmission to others.

Chlamydia or gonorrhoea infections can occur in the urethra, anus or pharynx, with symptoms including: pain in the rectum, irregularity, pus or blood discharge, itching, and inflammation of the rectum. As many as 90% of pharyngeal infections are asymptomatic but occasionally some experience sore throat and fever accompanied by swollen glands.

It is common for both chlamydia and gonorrhoea to exist simultaneously. Subsequently, if a patient tests positive for one disease many doctors will automatically treat both.

The best method of preventing the spread of these STDs, aside from abstaining from sexual intercourse, is the regular use of condoms. Condoms, used properly, will prevent the transmission of both chlamydia and gonorrhoea. For further information on STD's please feel free to come see us at the AIDS resource room in MacLaggan Hall, Room 120B.

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Hours: 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. Mon. - Sat., 1p.m. - 5 p.m. Sunday

Residence Notices

The ladies of the Dunn request your presence at the LDH dining hall on January 17, 1992 at 7:00 pm for their first annual 24 hour Dunn Dance-a-thon. All proceeds go towards playground equipment for the children of The Women of Transition House. Pledges can be made by telephone to 450-6545, 450-6599, or 450-6583. Teams must consist of six people with a minimum of two people per team on the dance floor at all times. Pledge sheets will be given out at a later date. Live band, DJ and refreshments throughout the night. Get a team together and keep watching for updates.