Activists and reformers in the United States have long recognized the harm of domestic violence and sought to improve the lives of women who were battered. During the late 20th century, nurses took up the call. With passion and persistence they worked to reform a medical profession that overwhelmingly failed to acknowledge violence against women as a serious health issue. Beginning in the late 1970s, nurses were in the vanguard as they pushed the larger medical community to identify victims, adequately respond to their needs, and work towards the prevention of domestic violence. This is their story.

In the mid-1990s, the movement against domestic violence continued to fight for change nationwide. Across the country, activists gathered in support of victims of domestic violence and called for an end to violence.

The National Library of Medicine produced this exhibition

Guest Curator: Catherine Jacquet, PhD
Designer: The Design Minds

www.nlm.nih.gov/confrontingviolence
Crowd of people marching holding anti-domestic violence signs.

AUGUST 26, 1976

Women rally in City Hall Plaza, in Boston to speak out against violence against women ©Ellen Shub 2015 all other rights reserved

This is an illustration of two protesting women

1989

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists defines for member physicians “The Battered Woman”

Courtesy American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists’ first bulletin on domestic violence outlined the definition, incidence, and public health impact of abuse, and stressed the importance of identifying victims and providing methods for medical intervention.

1985

Surgeon General’s Workshop on Violence and Public Health: Report, Health Resources and Services Administration

The surgeon general’s workshop on Violence and Public Health brought together over 150 experts from across disciplines to discuss recommendations on the evaluation, prevention, and treatment of violence, including child abuse, child sexual abuse, rape and sexual assault, and spouse abuse.

TREAT
AND
ADVOCATE

As the movement against domestic violence evolved, women of color and immigrant women called attention to their specific needs.