

Pilot Study to Assess the Viability of a Rape Trauma Syndrome Questionnaire

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Abstract

Introduction: Studies have revealed that rape victims undergo a number of psychological symptoms following the attack, which constitute a specific syndrome termed the rape trauma syndrome (RTS). Evidence of the RTS has been admitted as scientific testimony in the prosecution of sexual offences and has been integral in their successful conviction. The present study aims to assess the viability of a questionnaire designed to identify the RTS in victims of alleged rape. **Materials and Method:** A 77-item rape trauma syndrome questionnaire (RTSQ) was developed and administered to 30 women who reported rape and 57 nurses who formed the control group. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Windows Version 6.0). **Results:** Statistical analysis suggested that the questionnaire was internally consistent and effective in uncovering significant differences between rape victims and controls in their experience of rape trauma symptoms. Rape victims scored significantly higher than controls on the RTS scale. Those who faked rape were also found to endorse a greater number of the rape trauma symptoms than actual rape victims, as well as a greater number of fictitious and unlikely symptoms. **Conclusion:** This pilot study confirmed the viability of the RTSQ and paves the way for a more rigorous examination of its reliability and validity. In the future, the questionnaire may be of use in ascertaining the veracity of victims' claims of rape in the conviction of sexual offences where circumstances are equivocal.

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