The IRIS Project: An Internet Based Intervention to Improve Mental Health Outcomes for Abused Women

What is The IRIS Project?

The IRIS Project is a research study to check the usefulness of the first interactive internet-based safety decision aid for abused women.

Intimate partner violence (IPV), also known as domestic violence, is a common problem that can cause physical and mental health issues for the survivors and their families. One of the most widely recommended ways to support abused women is through safety planning. Safety for abused women can take time, resources, and usually involves the survivor making difficult decisions. Our challenge is to help women develop a personalized safety plan that addresses their situation.

In May 2010, Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing and Oregon Health & Science University began a 5-year study to test the internet-based safety decision aid with abused women. Findings from the original computerized safety decision aid suggests that it offered women privacy to consider personalized safety options, informed them about danger in their relationship and would be used again if they had access to it through a safe internet site.

Who is conducting the study?

The National Institute of Mental Health funds this multi-site study. Johns Hopkins University is partnered with Oregon Health & Science University, University of Missouri, Arizona State University, and Kaiser Center for Health Research.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to check the usefulness of an interactive internet-based safety decision aid on abused women's:

1. Safety seeking behaviors
2. Exposure to violence by an intimate partner/ex-partner
3. Mental health
4. Safety decision process while in an unsafe relationship

Who are the study participants?

The study will include 720 adult women, 18 years and older, from Maryland, Oregon, Missouri, and Arizona who:

- Speak English or Spanish
- Are currently in an abusive relationship
- Feel comfortable using a computer and have access to a safe computer with internet

What will study participants be asked to do?
Women will be randomized (like flipping a coin) into either an intervention or a control group. Over one year, women in each group will be asked to complete a confidential computerized survey at four time points (baseline, 3, 6 and 12 months post baseline). The survey is designed to collect information from women on:
- Demographics (age, race/ethnicity, education)
- Employment, income and housing stability
- Incidents of IPV and danger level in the relationship
- Health, mental health, substance use
- Safety seeking behaviors and decision making processes

All women in the study will receive a safety plan with resources for themselves and their children (if they have children). The control group members will receive a standard safety plan while the intervention group receives a personalized safety plan based on participant's priorities and unique situation. Women in both groups will be compensated for their time and expertise after each survey is completed.

Who can I contact for more information about participating in the IRIS project?
For more information please contact:
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