

DOCUMENTING

It is a critical and legal part of dental hygiene care to document findings of what one has seen during the assessment phase.

A woman who has suffered domestic violence has had some of her power and control taken away from her. Therefore, if a woman discloses domestic violence during her appointment, the dental hygienist should respectfully ask if the woman would like the disclosure reported in her health file. It affords the woman power and control over this information.

The dental hygienist should remind her client that privacy legislation protects the confidentiality of what is in the health record.

If a woman says no to documenting the abuse you need to be respectful of that choice.

If a woman says yes to documenting the abuse, the woman's own words should be denoted with quotation marks.

If a woman's injuries are evident, you must have her permission to take photographs. You should also remind her that she may access that information at a later date should she need to do so for legal reasons.

Unlike the mandatory legal requirement to report suspected child abuse, there is no mandatory legal requirement to report domestic violence for health care providers unless a threat has been made and you believe your patient is in imminent danger.