

## Violence in Bern

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Although nowadays violence and the violent behaviour of people are topics of mainstream interest, studies or numbers for Switzerland are still hard to find, when compared to other countries [1, 2].

This article attempts to focus on the experiences among victims of personal violence who visited the emergency unit of the University Hospital in Bern between January and December 2000.

The files of 69 patients (45 male, 24 female) were identified and analysed using the newly developed emergency unit software Qualicare™, a "relational database", which connects clinical data with categorised keywords.

The average age of the study population (n = 69) was 31.7 years (range 17–56), of the female subgroup (n = 24) 31.6 years (range 18–48) and of the male subgroup (n = 45) 31.7 years (range 16–56). 58% (n = 14) of the female patients and 52.5% (n = 24) of the male patients declared being of Swiss origin, while the others had other nationalities.

Weekends seemed to be the most violent time and accounted for 51% (n = 35) of all emergency attendances. The influence of alcohol or drugs was noted in 25% of the patients (n = 17). 80% of all attacks (n = 55) happened between 6 p.m. and 8 a.m. 45% of all non domestic assaults happened on Saturday night. We found no peak like this for domestic violence. In 66% of all assaults (n = 46) personal violence between two or more men was noted, while in 31% (n = 21) the reason for the admission to the unit was domestic violence directed against women. Only one woman and one man were assaulted by a female person. 72% (n = 17) of our female patients were victims of their current partners, 11% (n = 3) women were assaulted by ex-partners. 89% (n = 21) of all attacks against women happened at home. Only two female patients were attacked on the street. 95% (n = 66) of patients were assaulted with blunt objects compared to 5% (n = 3) attacked with a sharp instrument. The majority of the patients sustained soft tissue injuries of head and body. In 14% (n = 10) patients maxillo-facial fractures were diagnosed. 10% (n = 7) had clinical signs of cerebral concussion on presentation (GCS range 13–15). Women sustained predominantly blunt head and facial injuries (89%), compared to men where the head was injured only in 67%.

Although personal violence in Bern constitutes a less severe burden, compared to

other cities, we would like to encourage other hospitals in Switzerland to review their own data and to start a discussion about prevention and limitation of violent and aggressive behaviour in our society [3, 4].

A prospective study of violent behaviour and its associated socio-economic burden will follow.

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