

## WHO Cares

### **Sandra Martin works with the World Health Organization (WHO) to assure optimal care for women survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.**



Dr. Sandra Martin

Dr. Sandra Martin's career has been devoted to preventing violence and helping violence survivors recover from trauma. Martin's research has focused on violence during pregnancy, the role of substance abuse in violence, and the impact of domestic violence and sexual assault programs for violence survivors, among other topics.

She knows well that domestic violence and sexual assault are common global problems that result in extensive health problems.

Women violence survivors rely on health-care services more often than do other women as they deal with the physical, emotional and mental health problems associated with this trauma.

Research shows that recovery from domestic violence and sexual assault should be grounded in comprehensive, gender-sensitive health-care services addressing survivors' many needs. Such comprehensive care includes crisis intervention, social work and legal services, which are beneficial in helping women reclaim their lives.

Many health-care professionals do not have sufficient training to care for women violence survivors. Therefore, the World Health Organization (WHO) aims to develop appropriate guidelines. Such guidelines will help raise awareness and educate health-care providers and policy makers about the need to initiate strong, relevant responses to violence against women.

Martin serves on the six-person Guideline Steering Group for the project. The group's work is based on extensive, systematic reviews of scientific literature and input from international professionals who study violence against women.

"It has been a true honor to work with WHO and the global experts who have helped develop these guidelines," Martin says. "We all hope that this collaborative undertaking will help to improve the health and well-being of millions of women worldwide whose lives have been touched by violence."

—JB Shelton

*Sandra L. Martin, PhD, is professor of maternal and child health and associate dean for research at the School.*