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# Behind Closed Doors

## Domestic & Family Violence in MS

Rochelle Brown RN

Neurological Liaison Nurse

[rochelle.brown@mswa.org.au](mailto:rochelle.brown@mswa.org.au)



# Case Study

## Background:

- Tasmin is aged 48 years old
- Tasmin and her husband Mike were born overseas, sharing a country of origin where they met and lived for some years serving in the armed forces before immigrating to Perth, Australia in 2015.
- Tasmin lives with Mike in a privately-owned single-story property.

# Case Study

## Medical History:

- Asthma – allergic
  - Varicella-Zoster Virus infection
  - Hyperthyroidism
  - Hirschsprung's Disease
  - Keratoconus
  - Complex PTSD
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Tonsillectomy
  - Swine Flu
  - Septorhinoplasty
  - Degenerative changes to the coccyx
  - L) Tibial Tubercle Transfer
  - RRMS
  - L) Shoulder Dislocation
  - L) lower limb DVT
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# Case Study

## Current Medications:

- Siponimod
- Salbutamol - PRN
- Celecoxib
- Low-dose naltrexone
- Diazepam

## OTC:

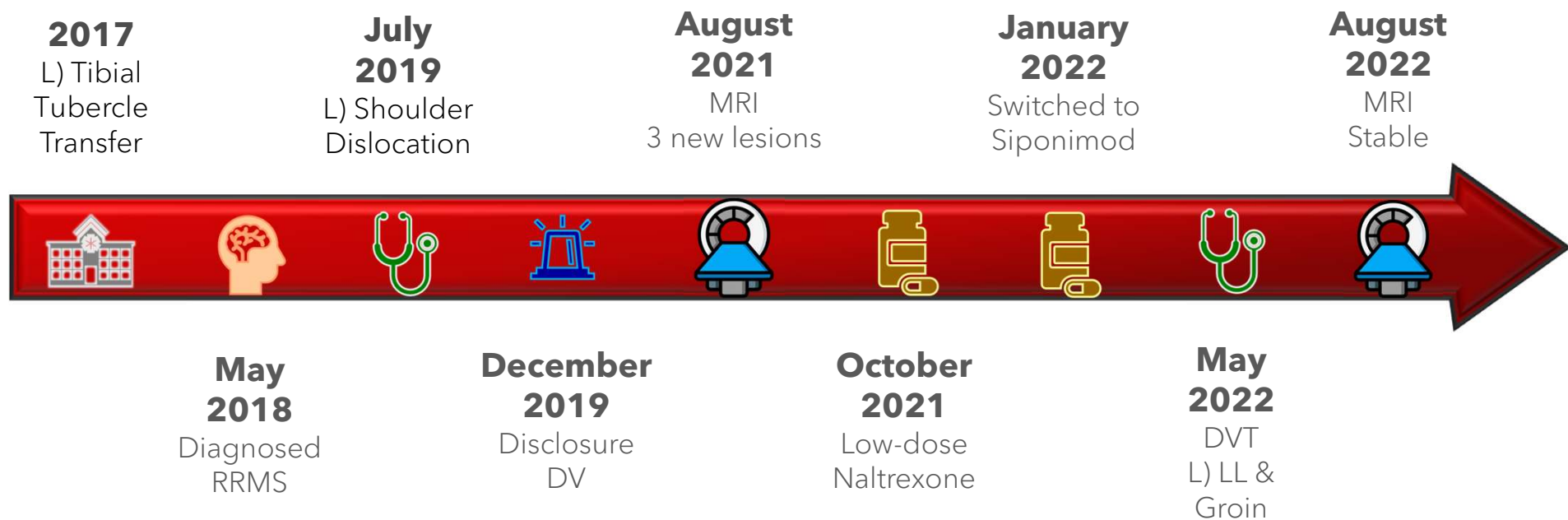
- Caruso's Thyroid Manager
  - Ibuprofen - PRN
  - Turmeric
  - Grape seed extract
  - Glucosamine
  - Sambucol (Blackberry extract)
  - Vitamins B12, C & D3
  - Magnesium
  - Fish Oil
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# Case Study



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## Timeline



# Domestic & Family violence and disability

**The different types of violence experienced by victim-survivors with disability can include:**

- Hitting, punching, choking, kicking, pushing, and burning with lit cigarettes
  - Treats, such as threatening physical harm or threatening to have them institutionalised
  - Threats against their children, pets, or guide dog
  - Verbal abuse such as criticisms, put-downs, and insults
  - Taking control of disability aids against their wishes, such as moving their wheelchair around
  - Damaging or threatening damage to belongings, including disability aids
  - Neglect, such as refusing to wash or feed the victim-survivor or to hand over medications
  - Performing care in cruel ways, such as washing them in cold water
  - Refusing to offer help until the victim-survivor consents to sex
  - Unwanted sexual advances, ranging from unwanted touching to rape
  - Withholding information
  - Making decisions on the victim-survivor's behalf without their consent
  - Taking control of their finances without consent, including withholding money or not allowing them to shop for themselves
  - Isolating the victim-survivor from family, friends and services
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# Domestic & Family violence and disability

## The abusers

According to Western Australian research, the abusers are:

- Male spouse or partner – 43%
  - Parent – 15%
  - Female spouse or partner – 11%
  - Other relative – 8%
  - Child – 7%
  - Another person, such as neighbour – 6 %
  - Carer – 4%
  - Work colleague – 2%
  - Healthcare professional – 2%
  - House or flatmate – 1%
  - Clergy – 1%
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# Domestic & Family violence and disability

## Why people with disability are more likely to experience violence:

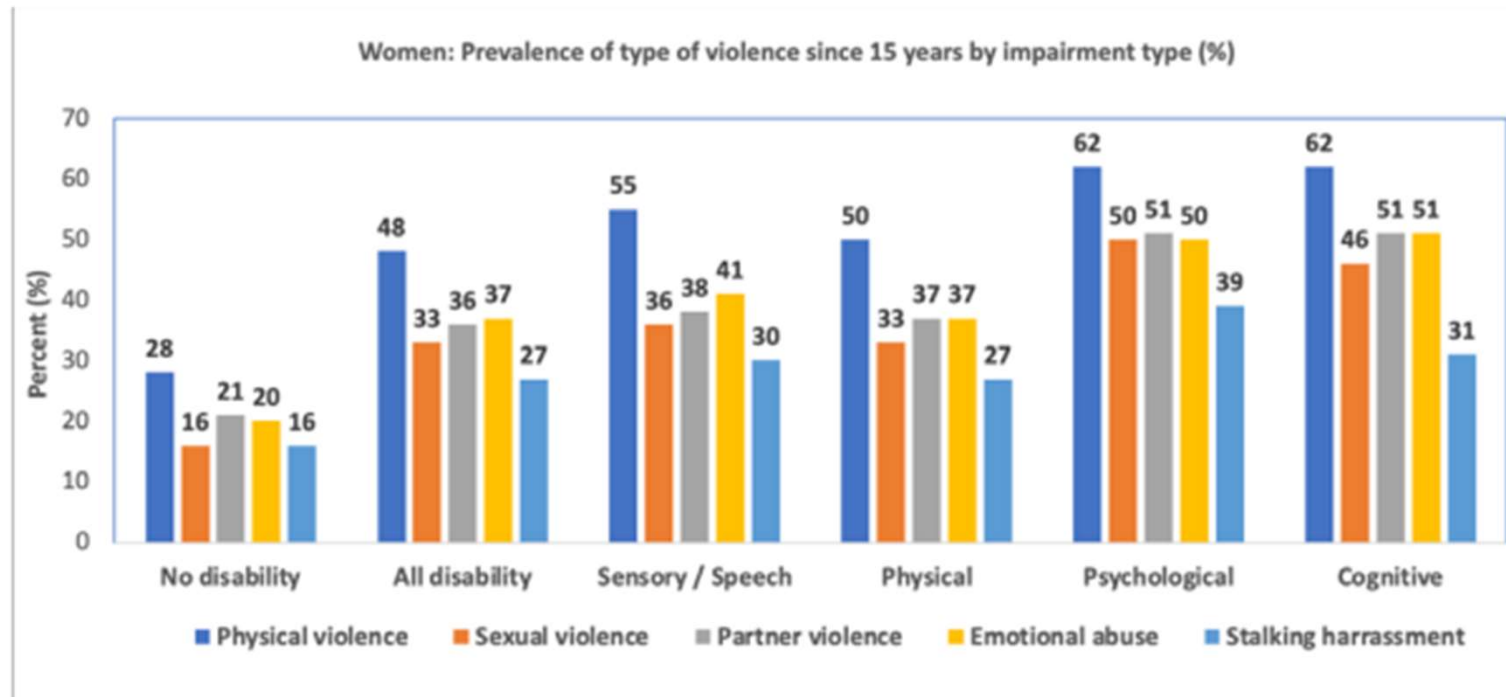
Some of the many reason for this include:

- **Social myths** – people with disability are often dismissed as passive, helpless, child-like, non-sexual and burdensome.
  - **Learned helplessness** – people with disability, particularly those with cognitive disabilities, or have been institutionalised for a long time, are encouraged to be compliant and cooperative.
  - **Lack of sex education** – there is a tendency to deny sex education to people with IDs.
  - **Dependence** – the victim-survivor may be dependent on their abuser for care because the disability limits their economic and environmental independence
  - **Misdiagnosis** – authorities may misinterpret a cry for help; e.g., victim-survivor's behaviour might be diagnosed as anxiety rather than signs of abuse.
  - **The abuser takes control** – if the victim-survivor seeks help, follow-up may be difficult because the abuser isolates them and prevents them using the phone or leaving the house.
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# Domestic & Family violence and disability

Prevalence of violence since age 15 for women by impairment type and type of violence (Australia)



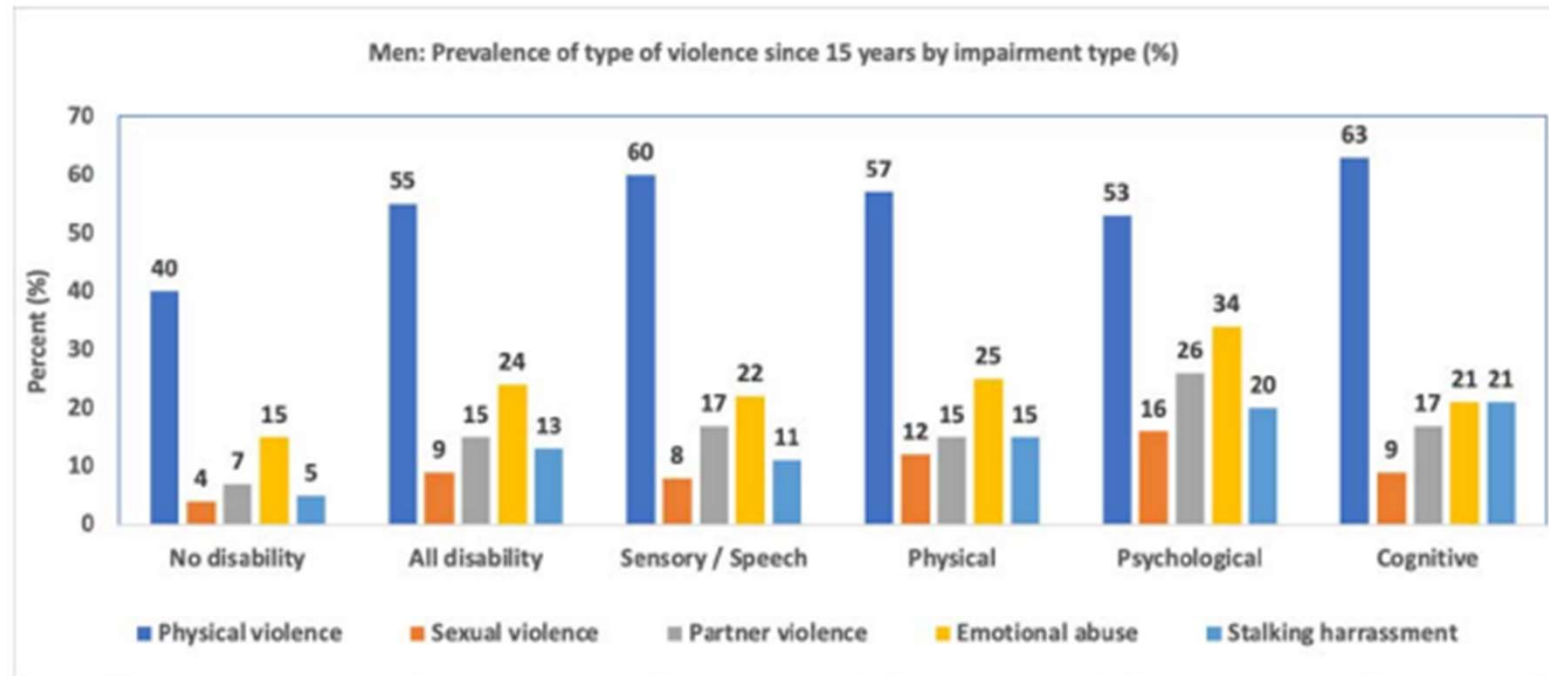
- Women with psychological and cognitive impairments have very high rates of all types of violence, particularly physical, sexual and partner violence as well as emotional abuse
- **One in two women (334,076 women) with psychological and/or cognitive impairment have experienced sexual violence** in their lifetime

# Domestic & Family violence and disability



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Prevalence of violence since age 15 for men by impairment type and type of violence, impairment type and type of violence (Australia)

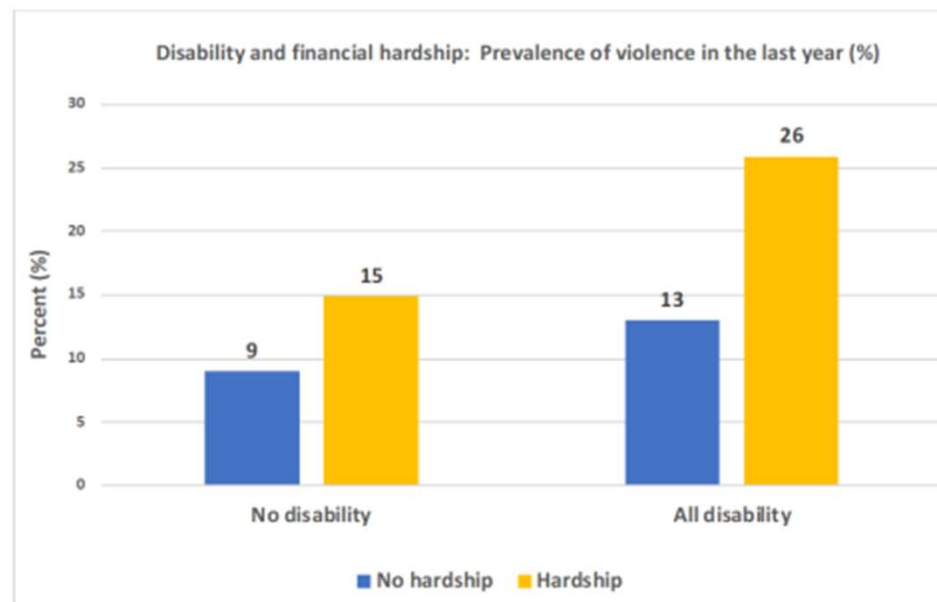


- Men with disability have high rates of physical violence across all impairment types
- Emotional abuse and intimate partner violence are **highest for men with psychological impairments**

# Family violence and disability

## Disability and socioeconomic hardship (Australia)

Figure 9: Prevalence of all violence in the last 12 months by disability status and financial hardship



- Financial hardship is associated with a two-fold increase in the experience of violence (regardless of disability status)
- **People with disability who report living in financial hardship are three times as likely to experience violence** than people without disability who report no financial hardship

# Family violence and disability

## Intersections between, gender, impairment type, and type of violence (New Zealand)



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# Family violence and disability

## Reflective practice

- As healthcare professionals we tend to be very good at addressing individuals' healthcare needs but not so much their psychosocial needs...
  - Fear is often the biggest barrier that no one will believe them or want to help and/or being punished by the abuser for reporting the violence
  - Only can only take a horse to water...
  - Disability policies tend to rely on family members taking care of the person
  - The abuser is often the caregiver, meaning the victim-survivor can be denied access to information or help to access support and/or services.
  - The wide range of disabilities makes it difficult to have a '*One size fits all*' policy or a way for all those who need help to access services.
  - The various agencies aren't cross-referenced as thoroughly as they should be, creating service gaps.
  - Studies and statistics on disability and family and domestic violence are few, as result agencies are not aware of the gaps.
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# Family violence and disability

## Responsibilities of healthcare workers



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Code of Conduct

For further information refer to NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au>



Australian Government  
Department of Social Services

ACT - [Guide to Responding to Disclosures of Domestic and Family Violence \(act.gov.au\)](https://www.act.gov.au)

NSW - [Communities and Justice \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au)

NT - [Get help for domestic, family and sexual violence | NT.GOV.AU](https://www.nt.gov.au)

QLD - [Reporting abuse | Community support | Queensland Government \(www.qld.gov.au\)](https://www.qld.gov.au)

SA - [Report abuse of vulnerable South Australians now | SA Housing Authority](https://www.sa.gov.au)

TAS - [Department of Premier and Cabinet \(dpac.tas.gov.au\)](https://www.tas.gov.au)

VIC - [Reporting incidents - DFFH Service Providers](https://www.vic.gov.au)

WA - [Department of Communities - Serious incident reporting application system \(www.wa.gov.au\)](https://www.wa.gov.au)



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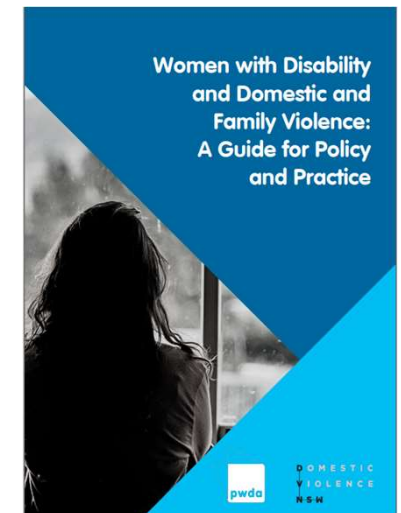
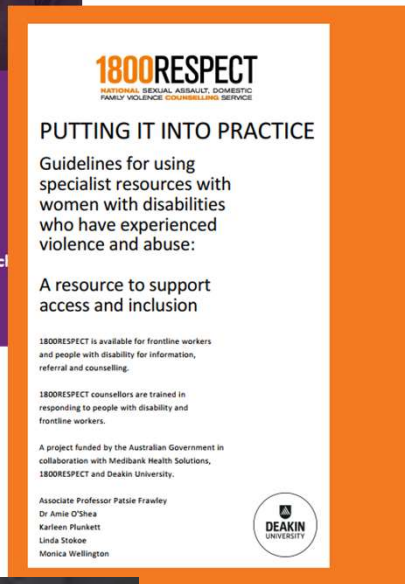
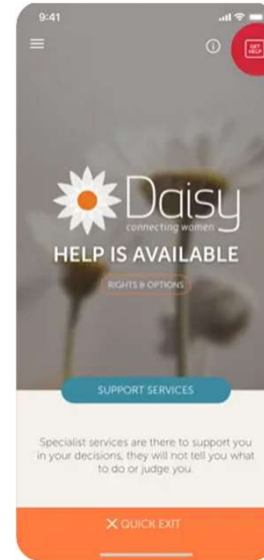
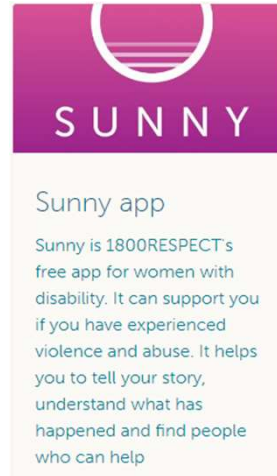
New Zealand - [Family violence guidelines | Ministry of Health NZ](https://www.health.govt.nz)



# Resources



**A Handbook on Supporting People with Intellectual Disability who have Experienced Domestic and Family Violence**



# Family violence and disability

## References/Bibliography

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ABS National Statistics about victims of a range of personal, household and family and domestic violence offences as recorded by police

[Recorded Crime - Victims, 2021 | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/abs/press-releases/2021/04/disability-and-violence-in-focus-crime-and-justice-statistics)

Better Health Channel – Family Violence and victim-survivors with disability

[Family violence and victim-survivors with disability - Better Health Channel](https://www.betterhealthchannel.org.au/family-violence-and-victim-survivors-with-disability)

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[Nature and extent of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation against people with disability in Australia \(royalcommission.gov.au\)](https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/research-reports/nature-and-extent-of-violence-abuse-neglect-and-exploitation-against-people-with-disability-in-australia)

The National Plan to End Violence against women and children 2022-2032

[National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 \(dss.gov.au\)](https://www.dss.gov.au/national-plan-to-end-violence-against-women-and-children-2022-2032)

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[Prevalence of Nonpartner Physical and Sexual Violence Against People With Disabilities \(ajpmonline.org\)](https://ajpmonline.org/article/S0095-4573(21)00100-0)

White Ribbon New Zealand

[Disabilities and Violence in New Zealand | White Ribbon New Zealand](https://www.whiteribbon.org.nz/disabilities-and-violence-in-new-zealand)

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