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Convocation on Rape, in Post

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MORRIS (4/5/76) -- "Without Consent: A Convocation on Rape" at the University of Minnesota, Morris Saturday examined myths and facts, prevention techniques and legal and medical aspects of one of the country's fastest growing, most under-reported crimes.

More than 80 people, including professionals, counselors, law enforcement officials, students and area people attended the meeting.

Some of the myths versus facts about sexual assault brought out include the following:

Although in some areas it is believed that most sexual assaults are provoked by the victim, the Federal Commission on Crimes of Violence reveal that only four per cent of reported sexual assaults involve precipitative behavior on the victim's part.

While many believe that only women who walk alone at night are sexually assaulted, studies show that one-third to one-half of sexual assaults are committed in the victim's home.

It is also a myth that sexual assault is an impulsive uncontrollable act occurring only among strangers. Statistics show that 58 per cent of sexual assaults are planned, and in 34 per cent of reported sexual assault cases the victim and offender know each other in some way.

Prevention techniques include locking doors and windows of both the home and car, requiring identification of all service personnel and never opening the door to strangers, avoiding walking alone at night and not being caught off guard.

"If you are sexually assaulted, you should assert yourself," said Bob Flint, University of Minnesota psychologist. "Use your common sense and kick, fight and scream, but do not fight against a weapon. It is more important to focus on remembering identifying information about the rapist to report to officials later than to risk losing your life.

"Report the assault immediately whether or not you choose to prosecute. You may save someone else from being victimized in the future.

(more)

"Do not bathe, douche, change clothes or clean up evidence of the rape. Instead write down details about the assailant and circumstances of the assault as soon as possible.

"Get an emergency medical exam for treatment of injuries, venereal disease and pregnancy and an evidentiary exam which is required for possible prosecution," he concluded.

The new Minnesota Sexual Conduct law was also explained. It classifies criminal sexual conduct into four degrees depending on the degree of force and nature and extent of injury.

It stipulates that the victim's testimony need not be corroborated, and provides that the victim need not prove resistance. In addition it provides that, with few exceptions, evidence of the victim's prior sexual behavior is not admissible in court, and that medical costs arising from examining the victim for purposes of gathering evidence be paid by the county in which the offense was committed.

Sessions dealing with the needs of the victim of sexual assault emphasized encouraging victims to report assault by providing an accepting, non-judgmental atmosphere while conducting investigations and medical examinations, and providing emotional support and personal counseling.

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