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SIR: Is the definition of rape gender neutral? Over the years, it has been noticed that most definitions of rape did not consider the males. Here are some definitions that are encompassing.  
  
The Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act: Section 1 of the VAPP Act defines rape as ‘‘when a person intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person with any other part of his or her body or anything else without consent, or with incorrectly obtained consent where such consent was obtained by force/ threats/ intimidation, false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, use of substances capable of taking away the will of the person or impersonating a married woman’s husband in order to have sex with her.’’  
  
Rome Statute, Element of Crimes,2002: states ‘‘Even slight penetration of any part of the body of the victim with a sexual organ, or of the anal or genital opening of the victim with an object or any other body part by force or threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or abuse of power, against such person or another person, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment, or the invasion was committed against a person incapable of giving genuine consent.’’  
  
A lot of studies show that cases of male rape are underreported. In addition, not so much is heard about the male victims compared to female victims. It is easily forgotten that they are at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, depression and suicide.  
  
These male victims are mocked, stigmatised and this terribly affects their ego. Due to cultural stereotypes and the masculinity of males, they do not share their experiences and those that do are tagged homosexuals.  
  
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When proper help is not given, health consequences ensue along with psychological trauma which leads to psychosocial malfunction. These damaged males go out to the society to cause more harm and it ends in a vicious cycle.  
  
Hence, the clarion call for awareness programmes at all levels of the society, sensitisation of the male community and provision of adequate tools and techniques that will be useful in this cause.  
  
Speaking to the appropriate authority can speed up healing and place the victim back on track. Because little is understood about male rape, little is done to alleviate the pain and suffering of these victims. Group therapy is highly recommended.  
  
I look forward to massive awareness campaigns, lasting measures to curb male rape and domestication of the VAPP Act in all states of Nigeria. I also envisage a protocol for attending to male victims of rape in health centres and hospitals. Rape should be a gender neutral crime and there is hope for all victims.  
  
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