

Nursing home abuse and neglect

[Life](#), [Home](#)



Research has shown that nursing home abuse is prevalent all across the United States. Nursing home abuse and neglect is an issue that continues to haunt the elderly population. One third of the 1, 600 nursing homes in the United States have been cited for abuse (Whitaker, 2001). According to Hooyman & Kiyak (2005) neglect is defined as caregiver not providing goods and services necessary to avoid physical harm or mental anguish.

According to Pillemer (1988) elderly abuse is synonymous to maltreatment, which is defined as deviance from socially accepted standards (legal or regulatory) for management of the interpersonal process, carried out with the intent to harm the patient. This being said I still feel that it is something in which the general public is unaware. Moreover, what makes this issue even more tragic is that it is something that can be prevented. I feel that stopping the abuse from spreading lies in the hands of the family and friends of the elderly individual.

The prevention begins at the first moment a nursing home is researched and visited. I think too often people do not ask the right questions and do not have enough knowledge to identify the signs related to abuse. It may be difficult to spot signs of abuse, however, because people tend to define abuse as different things. Signs are defined as the physical evidence able to be seen by others and symptoms are what the victim reports to others (not observable measures).

Unfortunately, staff that are the abusers usually use excuses such as the victim is clumsy or accident prone when accused of being negligent. These same staff members have been found to be angry and rough with the

residents on a regular basis (NHARC, 2006). According to Nursing Home Abuse Resource Center (2006) frequent visits to the emergency room coupled with unusual bruises in locations such as chest, abdomen, neck and thighs are hard to find yet still are important signs that the elder is being abused.

I believe the best solution to this problem is for communities to make information about all nursing homes known for public consumption. Instead of people having to research many different nursing homes on the internet, or looking up phone numbers and calling each one individually, I believe it would be beneficial for the community to make some sort of brochure with information about all of the nursing homes in the area. This would obviously not give statistics on how many cases of neglect or abuse a said nursing home has had, but I do believe it would be a helping starting point.

The brochure should have information such as the statistics of staff to patients, services offered, reviews and comments from past and present residents and families', and general information about each institution. It would also be beneficial to offer the website information leading to websites which grade nursing homes, giving tips on how to read and understand the information given. The obvious drawback of my plan is that it may be unlikely nursing homes would agree to have this information printed side by side with other nursing homes for comparison.

They may also not want their bad news aired for the public to know, so they may not want information pertaining to informational websites posted for people to find out about. I think the benefits of this would be that friends and

families' of people moving into nursing homes would be given ample information to get them started in the right direction. They would be given the opportunity to compare many nursing homes, and also given information showing them how to further research each place to find out more statistics.

Some unanticipated consequences of this may simply be the reactions of the community and residents in said nursing homes. The community may think it is a good idea and warm up to it easily, or the community may be appalled by the information they find out and cause problems for everyone. I think it is important for everyone to be aware of the problem of nursing home abuse and neglect, but giving people the power to find out such things may cause problems that never would have surfaced if they remained ignorant.

Sometimes, knowledge is power; sometimes, it is fuel to the fire