

Educational nursing strategies: prevention of elder abuse and neglect

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Canada's population is ageing. Along with the increasing population of elderly, the rate of abuse and neglect in long term care facilities has risen proportionately, and nursing practice is presented with formidable challenges that call for prevention of elder abuse.

Recent studies in the literature on elder abuse and neglect emerge with consistent inferences that primary care workers in long term facilities are complicated by an understaffed and unprepared workforce that lack the specific knowledge and training to successfully prevent and report elder abuse and neglect. The purpose of this paper is to explore the strategies to improve reporting, increase awareness, and manage elderly abuse in long term facilities.

Introduction

Statistics Canada (2005), " predicted a substantial growth in the senior population in Canada from 3. 5 million people in 1996 to 6. 9 by 2021." The aging population is growing globally, and " society places great demands upon the healthcare system to meet the needs of elder persons" (Zamaal, 2006, Pg 2.).

Statistics Canada (2007), reported " more than 150, 000 Canadian seniors are now living in residential care facilities" (p. 16). An already overwhelmed healthcare system with a critical nursing and staffing shortage now faces the special needs of a continuing growing population with specific and substantial needs.

As Canadians increase their life ps, the demands placed on institutional facilities to deliver quality care of elder residents becomes critical in educational and training planning (Zamaal, 2006, p. 5). Abuse of older people is a complex phenomenon which in some instances will require complex prevention and management strategies (British Geriatrics Society, 2002, p. 313).

The dependence of an elderly person can increase her risk to violence by causing a strain on family relationships that escalates as the older person becomes more vulnerable and requires more care. “ At the very core of abuse is this fundamental loss of respect for older people and their resultant vulnerability” (British Geriatrics Society, 2002, p. 313).

Many victims do not report the abuse from families, and the problem is complicated with their dependence on the perpetrator, especially if the abuse comes from an adult child, friend, or persons held in a trusted position (National Counseling on Ageing and Older People, 2006).

According to a study (Wolf, 2004), a qualitative survey of Canadian elders showed that 4. 0 percent of older adults surveyed had been abused at some time by a family member or caregiver (p. 39).

According to the National Advisory Council on Aging (2006), “ Canada’s abuse and neglect of the elderly are thought to be seriously under-reported, so statistics are unreliable, due to surveys that capture only what the victims want to disclose, while police data reveal only the abuse that comes to their attention.”