

# Elderly abuse awareness

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### Abstract

The essay aims to address a two-fold objective to wit: (1) to discuss the status of elderly today; and (2) to identify and explain the different health care issues regarding elderly abuse using information from outside sources.

### Elderly Abuse Awareness

Elderly abuse is the term that describes the mistreatment or harmful treatment of an elderly person. Elderly can be abused in different ways such as physical, emotional, sexual, financial abuse and neglect. Physical abuse is the act of creating and imposing pain or injury to the elders; emotional or psychological abuse inflicts emotional pain and distress to the person; and sexual abuse in the elderly includes unconsented sexual contact and forcing the elderly to do acts of lasciviousness. Other forms of abuse are financial exploitation, the act of using the funds and properties without the permission of the elderly and the most common, neglect of the elderly. Abuse can be intentional or non-intentional and may lead to total neglect if there is a failure on the side of the caregiver or any relatives to take full responsibility and obligations in caring for the needs of elderly (Crutchfield, 2011, n. p.). According to Hoffman & Summers (2006), elderly abuse is considered as one of most serious public health problems today and is expected to be a health issue in the future (p. 2). Currently, the prevalence rate of elderly abuse is estimated to be over 2 million cases annually (p. 1).

The National Center on Elder Abuse in the United States collects data and information in different nursing homes and observes for any evidenced of elderly abuse. The department compiled all the data collected and then published the results to the public, nursing homes and other health care

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facilities in United States (Contact a Nursing Home Abuse Lawyer Today, 2005, n. p.).

Based from statistics, more than 30% of all nursing homes in America pamper in some form of resident abuse. Hence, more than 50% of nursing homes are lack of staff to provide the right care of the patient. As a result, the present staff working in the facility suffers from overload which leads to nursing home neglect and abuse (Contact a Nursing Home Abuse Lawyer Today, 2005, n. p.).

Despite of the increased funding of the government on public health programs against elderly abuse, there is no easy solutions found and the rates continue to increase dramatically. Sad to say, most of the elderly abuse occurs only within the family. Similarly, a large number of elderly in the nursing homes is also at risk for violence and abuse (Hoffman & Summers, 2006, p. 5).

Signs and symptoms of elderly abuse are not yet recognized at first glance and the person concerned may not take the signs seriously. Initially, the presence of symptoms is the same as of dementia – a degenerative disorder of the elderly and a sign of an elderly person's frailty. The signs and symptoms can be mistaken as symptoms of mental retardation. For instance, the caregiver may observe unexplained signs of injury, bruises and scars not knowing that those were already signs of physical abuse. There is also presence of broken bones, sprains and dislocation and elderly might demonstrate behaviors commonly observed in elderly with dementia such as rocking, sucking or mumbling – some of the general sign also of emotional abuse (De Benedictis, Robinson & Segal, 2011, n. p.).

De Benedictis, Robinson & Segal (2011) also added other signs and

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symptoms of sexual abuse such as bruises in the breasts and genitals, presence of genital infections, and unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding. The health care provider might also observe unusual weight loss, malnutrition and dehydration of the elderly, signs that the elderly are neglected by the family. In general, the signs of elderly abuse are the observable changes in personality and behavior of the elderly.

Elderly abuse can be prevented and reduced by listening to the elderly regarding the areas of concern, intervening when elderly abuse is suspected, and advocating in public education of recognizing and reporting abuse immediately. The Adult Protective Services (APS) is the department that takes charge and responds to the needs of the elderly. The APS role is to investigate abuse cases, intervene, offer services and give advice. In addition, the person concern can also report incident of abuse to the doctor or trusted friends and relatives (De Benedictis, Robinson & Segal, 2011, n. p.).

According to Department of Health & Human Services in 2010, The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse with the cooperation of World Health Organization launched the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day last June 15, 2010. The purpose of the organization is to provide an opportunity around the world to promote and provide better understanding of the situation of elderly abuse in the society. The purpose of the organization is to increase the community awareness about the cultural, social, economic, and demographic processes that contributes to elderly abuse, neglect and exploitation. WEAAD is a day to conduct outreach programs and professional training and aims to generate attention and support for the programs that enhance the lives and independence of older

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individuals. The organization works to prevent and intervene in elder abuse and neglected (National Center on Elder Abuse, 2011, p. 1). In addition, the National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA) in 2011, commits in helping the national, state, and local partners in ensuring that the older Americans will live with dignity, integrity and independence and that there will be no more abuse, neglect and exploitation against the elderly.

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