Senior Abuse.....Why?
Issues of Financial and Abuse of Elderly Disabled Persons

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AGENDA
1. Definition of Elder Abuse
2. Identification of Abuse and Neglect
3. Older Adults at Risk – Who and Why and How to Identify
4. Abuser Profiles
5. How can you make a difference?
6. Resources available
7. Summary/Questions

Ontario’s Strategy to Combat Elder Abuse
1. Co-ordination of Community Services
   • To strengthen communities across the province by building partnerships, promoting information sharing and supporting their efforts to combat elder abuse
2. Multi-Sectoral Training for Front-Line Staff
   • Specialized training initiative for front-line staff from various sectors, who work directly with seniors, to prepare and guide them in recognizing and responding to elder abuse
3. Public Education and Awareness
   • A Province-wide, multi-media public education campaign to promote awareness about elder abuse and provide information on how to access services

POWER OF 3
ONPEA’s Learning Resource Centre
ONPEA’s Core Curriculum
ONPEA’s Online Training Tools

Is Senior Abuse a Big Problem?

Please feel free to interrupt to ask questions.
No question is stupid!
Elder Abuse

- Has no boundaries; it can happen anywhere, anytime, to anyone
- Pattern of behaviors that has existed over a period of time
- Occurs in all cultures & faiths
- 4/5 cases never reported

Prevalence

- 3 common variables:
  - Unequal balance of power
  - Dependency
  - Isolation.
  Isolation is one way abuser controls victim and keeps the abuse hidden. (Groh, 2003)
- Not a one-time occurrence

How Many Seniors Are Abused?

According to the WHO, 5% of seniors are experiencing some form of abuse.

It is estimated that this can range from 2%-25%.

Demographics of Abuse

Total Population of Older Adults 1.74 M
Elder Abuse Rate 5%-10%
Number of Ontarians facing Elder Abuse 69,600-174,000
Statistics Canada, 2009

By 2026: 3 Million Seniors
1 out of four Canadians will be over 65 years-

Some Facts...

- The majority of abuse is never reported!
- Injuries sustained from abuse can negatively impact senior’s health & independence.
- Financial abuse takes away or reduces senior’s choices of where & how to live.
- Financial abuse means senior has far less to spend on basic necessities of life.
- Abuse undermines senior’s quality of life.

Sadly, 10% of seniors have more than one abuser.

(Christopher, C. 2000)
What is Elder Abuse?
The World Health Organization (WHO, 2004) defines elder abuse as:
“a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring in any relationship where there is an expectation of trust that causes harm or distress to an older person”.

The abuser can be a spouse, child, family member, friend or paid caregiver.

Despite what many think elder abuse is a lot more than hitting a senior. It is a multi-faceted problem and very complex.

ABUSE CONTINUUMS

- Abuse, if not addressed, can escalate with an increasing seriousness of harm.
- Physical abuse can go from “minor” neglect through to abuses where medical treatment would be necessary and on to death.
- Older adult victims are vulnerable to complications resulting from physical violence - can affect ability to function independently.

WHAT IS AGEISM?

Ageism is the prejudice or discrimination against older people.

AGEISM

- Discrimination on the basis of age
- Makes assumptions about capability
- Removes decision-making process
- Ignores older person’s wishes
- Ignores older person’s right to live at risk
- Treats older adult as a child

Types of Abuse

- Physical
- Psychological
- Financial
- Neglect
- Violation of Rights

Elder Abuse Television Public Service Announcements

Financial Abuse
FINANCIAL ABUSE

Any act done without consent that results in the financial or personal gain of one person at the expense of another.

- Theft of money or possessions
- A person in a position of legal trust may withhold money
- Improper use of power of attorney
  - Sudden debit accrual
  - Unpaid bills
  - Change in living conditions
  - No money/food/clothes
  - Absence of aids and services
  - Sudden appearance of previously uninvolved relatives
  - Abrupt changes in Wills/Accounts/POA’s
  - Disappearance of possessions
  - Forged signatures

COMMON FAMILY PRESSURES

- Emergency loans
- Places to live when they are out of job
- Help paying for higher education (university)
- Assisting with major purchases (i.e., car)
- Making down payments for a home
- Co-signing or serving as guarantor for loans
- Using house title as collateral
- Help avoiding bankruptcy (adult son/daughter) at the point of losing business, home

COMPONENTS OF FINANCIAL ABUSE

Financial abuse can happen to any older adult when the abuser has:

- GREED: The abuser really wants or needs money (i.e., unemployment or debt)
- FALSE SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT: feels a right to the older person’s money or belongings, “I deserve it; I’m owed”
- OPPORTUNITY: access to funds or property

Facts to Think About

The abuser may gain access to an older person’s money or belongings by:

- Isolating senior
- Controlling and abusive behaviours
- Undue influence through manipulation, lies, threats
- Making false promises to care for older person at home vs. institution

EXAMPLES OF FINANCIAL ABUSE

- Threats of losing home, being institutionalized, not allowing family visits.
- Forging a signature on pension cheques or legal documents
- Pressure to sell home, change will, sign documents
- Refusing to move out of senior’s home, or pay shared expenses
- Withholding financial information
- Misusing Power of Attorney for finances

ABUSIVE & CONTROLLING BEHAVIOURS

- Belief that old people do not need money
- Belief that older people do not have a future
- Belief that only men control/handle the finances
- Belief by adult children that parent’s money is theirs
- Unwillingness to teach money handling skills
- Not repaying loans/repeated borrowing
- Leaving a senior destitute
WHAT MONEY MEANS...

It is a means to:
• Independence
• Control over own life
• Choice about where to live
• Opportunity to share
• Exercise personal choice

Many Seniors believe they have a continued responsibility to help their family financially, if the need arises

Who determines NEED?

Adapted from Diminishing Autonomy 1995 by Charmaine Spencer.

Facts to Think About

• Financial abuse is a pattern rather than a single event.
• It often happens over a long period of time
• Often, when an older person is being financially abused, he or she may also be psychologically or physically abused

It’s their money – their decision!

FINANCIAL ABUSE

Financial abuse is illegal

FINANCIAL ABUSE IS A CRIME

- Statistics:
  – A recent B.C. study found that 8% of older adults have been financially abused, losing, on average, $20,000 each
  – Other Canadian studies have found that financial abuse is the most commonly reported form of abuse experienced by older people

POWERS OF ATTORNEY

1. Financial Decisions (POA for Property)
   - control & management of property, assets, etc.

2. Personal Decisions (POA) for Personal
   - health
   - nutrition
   - shelter
   - safety
   - hygiene
   - clothing

NON SEQUITUR BY WILEY

When Little Red Riding Hood went to her grandmother's house, her fairy godmother said, "Tell your stepmother that I'll be your fairy godmother."

"She" said, "Helping me with my costume is sooo much better than helping me with my homework!"

"Okay," I said, "she's in the kitchen."

"She's in the kitchen?" she said. How dumb can you be?"
Power of Attorney for Health

- Does not mean they have the power to do what they want......
- Cannot make decisions on who should visit and who should not.....
- Restrict phone calls......

Power of Attorney for Finances

- Money is to be spent on Senior
- Whatever the needs are
- If Senior complains about his/her finances and that someone is withholding money or not willing to provide: it’s a big concern

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Any act of violence or rough handling that may or may not result in physical injury causing physical discomfort and pain.

- Assault- Slapping, pinching, shoving, punching, hitting or any intentional rough handling
- Unlawful Confinement
- Dehydration or lack of food, over sedation

Also includes Sexual Abuse; any unwanted sexual behavior directed toward a person without their consent.
Emotional/Psychological Abuse
Any action, verbal or non-verbal, that lessens a person’s sense of dignity and worth.

Behaviours of the Senior
- Depression
- Anger
- Fear of family members, friends or caregivers
- Reluctance to speak openly
- Avoidance of contact with caregiver

Psychological Indicators
Behaviours of Family Member
- Verbally aggressive
- Insulting or threatening
- Shows unusual amount of concern over senior (too little or too much)
- Speaks for older adult
- Does not permit older adult’s involvement in making decisions
- Reluctant to leave older adult alone with professional
- Verbal and non-verbal insults
- Humiliation
- Treating elderly people like children
- Bullying or calling names
- Difficult to identify unless witnessed

Neglect
Not meeting the needs of an older person unable to meet them for herself or himself.

- Active Neglect: deliberate withholding of care or necessities of life.
- Passive Neglect: failure to provide proper care due to lack of knowledge, experience or ability.

Violation of Rights
Denying a person’s rights & freedoms such as:
- Withholding information person is entitled to
- Denying person privacy in own home environment
- Denying visitors or phone calls
- Restricting liberty/not allowing person to socialize
- Censoring mail

Statistics
- What age group is most vulnerable?
- Is abuse more common in community or institution?
- Who is the most likely perpetrator?
- Are women targeted more frequently than men?
- What is the most common form of abuse?

Who Abuses?

Source: Tatara, T (1993) Summaries of statistical data on elder abuse in domestic settings

CW-PILD 2006 -
Risk Factors for Abuse

- Isolation
- Physical frailty
- Cognitive status
- Finances

VIKTOR PROFILE

- Most often, over the age of 75
- Widowed or living alone
- Socially isolated
- Under the control or influence of the abuser
- Experiencing some degree of mental incapacity
- Physically frail but mentally capable

REMEMBER!
Abuse crosses all borders and can happen to anyone.

ABUSER PROFILE

- Can be any age
- No visible traits

WHY WOULD OLDER ADULTS REFUSE HELP?

- Fear more abuse
- Shame or humiliated
- Blame themselves for abuse
- Fear loss of affection
- Believe that family honour is at stake
- Fear involvement of others will lead to institution.
- Don’t want to air ‘dirty laundry’

BARRIERS TO OLDER IMMIGRANTS

- Isolated from friends (may not know others)
- Fear of being deported if sponsorship withdrawn
- Unable to communicate in English
- Lack of knowledge about Canadian system and laws; don’t know how to get help
- Dependent on children
- Family matters are private
- In Canada, more than 200 ethno-cultural groups

WHO REPORTS ELDER ABUSE?

Source: National Aging Resource Center on Elder Abuse, 1995
**Observation in a LTC Facility/Nursing Home**

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**From the Video just seen**

- What kind of abuse did you see?
- How many incidence did you see?
- What are the examples?

- No patient interaction
- Sigh
- Too busy to bring to toilet
- Negative Talk
- Talk about patient “as if she or he is not present”
- Complaining
- Gossip
- Pushing the wheel chair away
- Ignoring older man’s wishes
- Go in your diaper
- Miss Bladder Queen- Insulting
- Put a clean pad over dirty bedding
- Doesn’t provide info to visitor

**Elder Abuse Quiz**

1. People who are less powerful are vulnerable to abuse.
2. Abusers are likely to be trusted family members or friends.
3. Financial abuse is the most prevalent type of abuse.
4. Silence is a key factor when abuse occurs.
5. Female victims of abuse outnumber male victims.

**Signs of Neglect in Long Term Care or in care provision settings:**

- Person asks to be toileted, told to use briefs
- Persons requests ignored
- Briefs left on for long periods
- Unclean beds covered up with clean pad
- Person’s grooming left undone, hair, nails, etc.
- Person smelling of urine, or other odors
- Bibs on long after meal is over
- Wheel chair/walker dirty
- No foot rests, feet dangling
- Person left in chair, not moved hourly
- Person slumped over, damaged side not supported
- Person discussed as though they were not there
- Person ignored
- Person teased unkindly
- Person treated as task, not as a human being

When surveyed, 29% of staff rated these items as not abusive.

**Respect and Care**

It’s a real challenge to keep it in mind that Mrs. Smith is a unique human being

- Worthy of Respect
- Worthy of Dignity
- Worthy of CARE
Basics of Life

Most of us need three things in life…

** Something to do **
** Someone to love **
** Something to hope for **

If any one of these goes, a person may…

• Throw away the other two things and withdrawal from life
• Fight furiously trying to punish the world

Why don’t staff report abuse?

• Don’t want to tell on co-worker
• Fear of being called a “tattletale”
• Fear of retaliation
• Aren’t sure it was abusive
• Don’t want to get involved
• Belief resident is difficult, provoked behavior
• Bottom line: Staff must report

It’s tough to confront

• When a situation warrants your intervention and a hard-to-make decision, it will not be easy to make that call. Most of us are pleasers, we want people to like us, we don’t want friction. However, the often frail soul in that bed is relying on you to keep them safe.

There is really only one right choice.

Understanding:
The key issues of elder abuse which in-turn leads to the ability to recognize, interact and respond. Each situation is unique.

Recognize indicators of abuse
- Why is this situation causing me concern?
- What am I observing?

Interact with the senior at risk
- How do I feel about this situation/the alleged abuse?
- What are the values, wishes, goals of the person?
- Is the senior making the decisions?

Respond
- What resources are required?
- What are my responsibilities?
- What is my role on the team?

Reporting

Inform someone in charge immediately, usually a senior administrative person, that abuse or neglect is suspected. Reports can come from anyone either orally or in writing and may range from merely a suspicion to an outright accusation.

Reporting

What can you do about a suspected case of elder abuse?

• What internal policies exist within your organization?
• Who are you required to report elder abuse to?
• If you witness or suspect abuse you should...follow the protocol of your place of employment
Consequences of Not Reporting

- the abuse will continue and possibly accelerate
- violation of professional responsibility
- possible fine

Steps for Intervening

The following general steps may help guide responses:

- Responding
- Taking directions from residents (if capable)
- Reporting
- Investigating
- Documenting
- Intervening
- Follow-up

Documenting

At every step of the intervention, careful and accurate documentation is required. Statements are to be taken from all parties involved.

Responding

Anyone witnessing abuse or neglect must take immediate action to stop it. This may include telling the abuser to stop, calling for assistance or moving the resident out of harm’s way.

The resident’s safety and well-being is paramount at all times.

You Can Make a Difference! You may not be able to fix the problem but you can offer support and information. By being there for our patients, friends and neighbours we will build a safer community for us all.

Central Park Lodges, L. Denommee, RKM, 2004