



Forensic Research

SEPTEMBER 8, 2017

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
ElderJustice
INITIATIVE



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- ▶ Today's session will be recorded and made available on the training website.
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TODAY'S WEBINAR

Understanding Elder Mistreatment Through the Lens of Severity: Implications for Research and Practice

David Burnes, M.S.W., Ph.D.

ELDER JUSTICE INITIATIVE

- The **mission** is to support and coordinate the Department of Justice's enforcement and programmatic efforts to combat elder abuse, neglect, and financial fraud and scams that target older adults.
- The Initiative does so by—
 - Promoting justice for older adults.
 - Helping older victims and their families.
 - Enhancing state and local efforts through training and resources.
 - Supporting, organizing and presenting research to improve elder abuse policy and practice.

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Promoting Justice for Older Americans



Helping Older Victims and Their Families



Enhancing State and Local Efforts Through Training and Resources



Supporting Research to Improve Elder Abuse Policy and Practice

Introducing



David Burnes, M.S.W., Ph.D., is a professor at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, Canada, and an Affiliate Scientist at Baycrest Health Sciences.

Department of Justice Elder Justice Initiative

“Understanding Elder Mistreatment through a Lens of Severity: Implications for Research and Practice”

David Burnes, B.Sc., M.S.W., Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, University of Toronto

Affiliate Scientist, Baycrest Health Sciences

<http://socialwork.utoronto.ca/profiles/david-burnes/>

david.burnes@utoronto.ca

Presentation Overview

1. Present the dominant binary understanding of elder mistreatment
2. Move toward a lens of severity to understand the problem of elder mistreatment

ELDER MISTREATMENT

An intentional act or omission occurring in a relationship of trust, which causes harm or serious risk of harm (whether or not harm is intended) to a vulnerable older adult or deprives an older adult of basic needs.

Emotional

Physical

Sexual

Financial

Acts

Neglect (**Omission**)

(National Research Council, 2003)

Literature Review

Elder Abuse: Global Situation, Risk Factors, and Prevention Strategies

Karl Pillemer, PhD,*¹ David Burnes, PhD,² Catherine Riffin, PhD,³ and Mark S. Lachs, MD, MPH⁴

¹Department of Human Development, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. ²Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, Canada. ³Department of Internal Medicine and Geriatrics, Yale School of Medicine, New Haven, Connecticut. ⁴Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine, Weill Cornell Medical College, New York.

Pillemer, K., Burnes, D., Riffin, C., & Lachs, M.S. (2016). Elder abuse: Global situation, risk factors and prevention strategies. *The Gerontologist*, 56, S194-S205.
doi:10.1093/geront/gnw004.

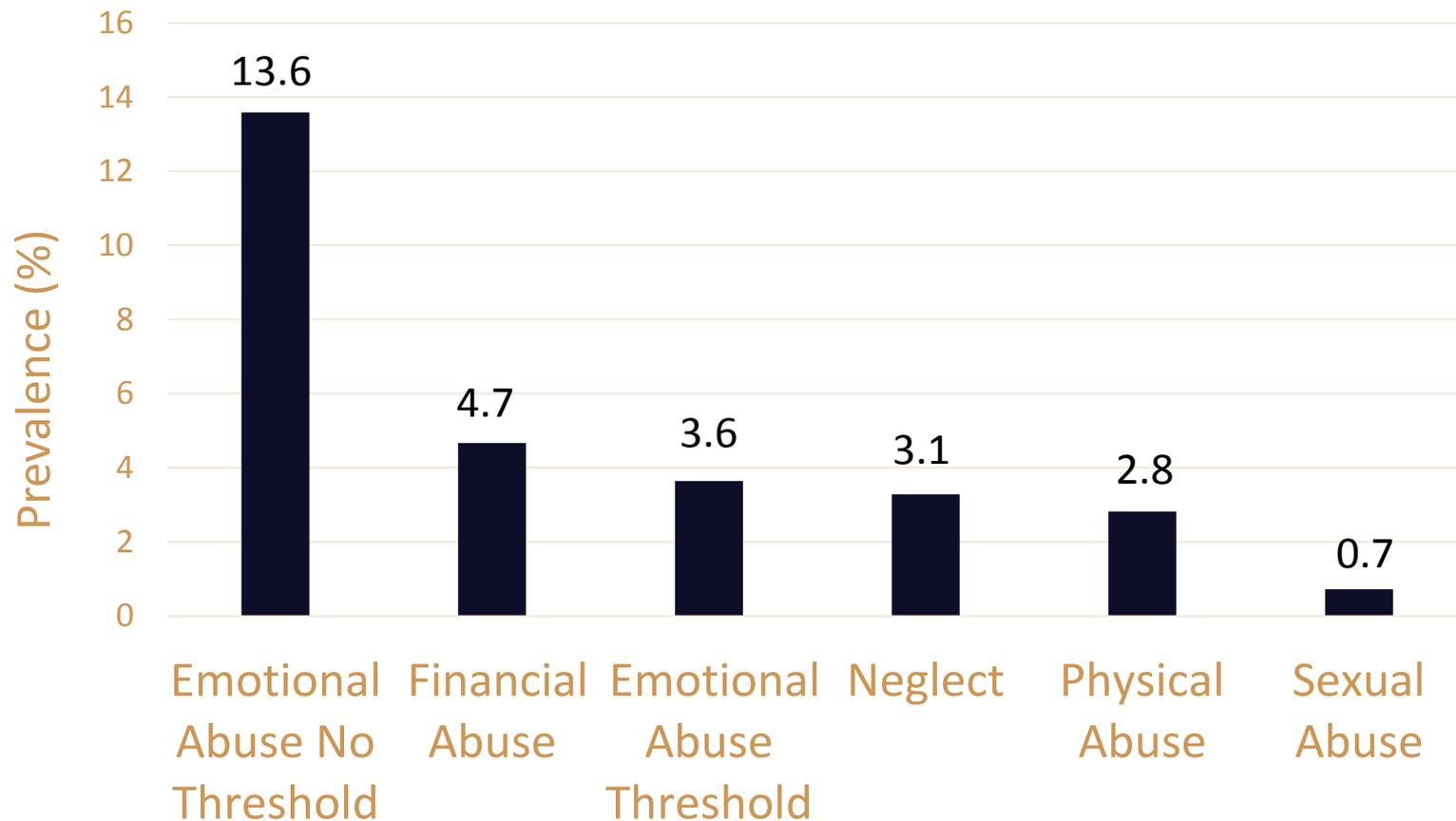
Global Prevalence Knowledge

Only large-scale, population-based studies using probability sampling and collecting data directly from older adults

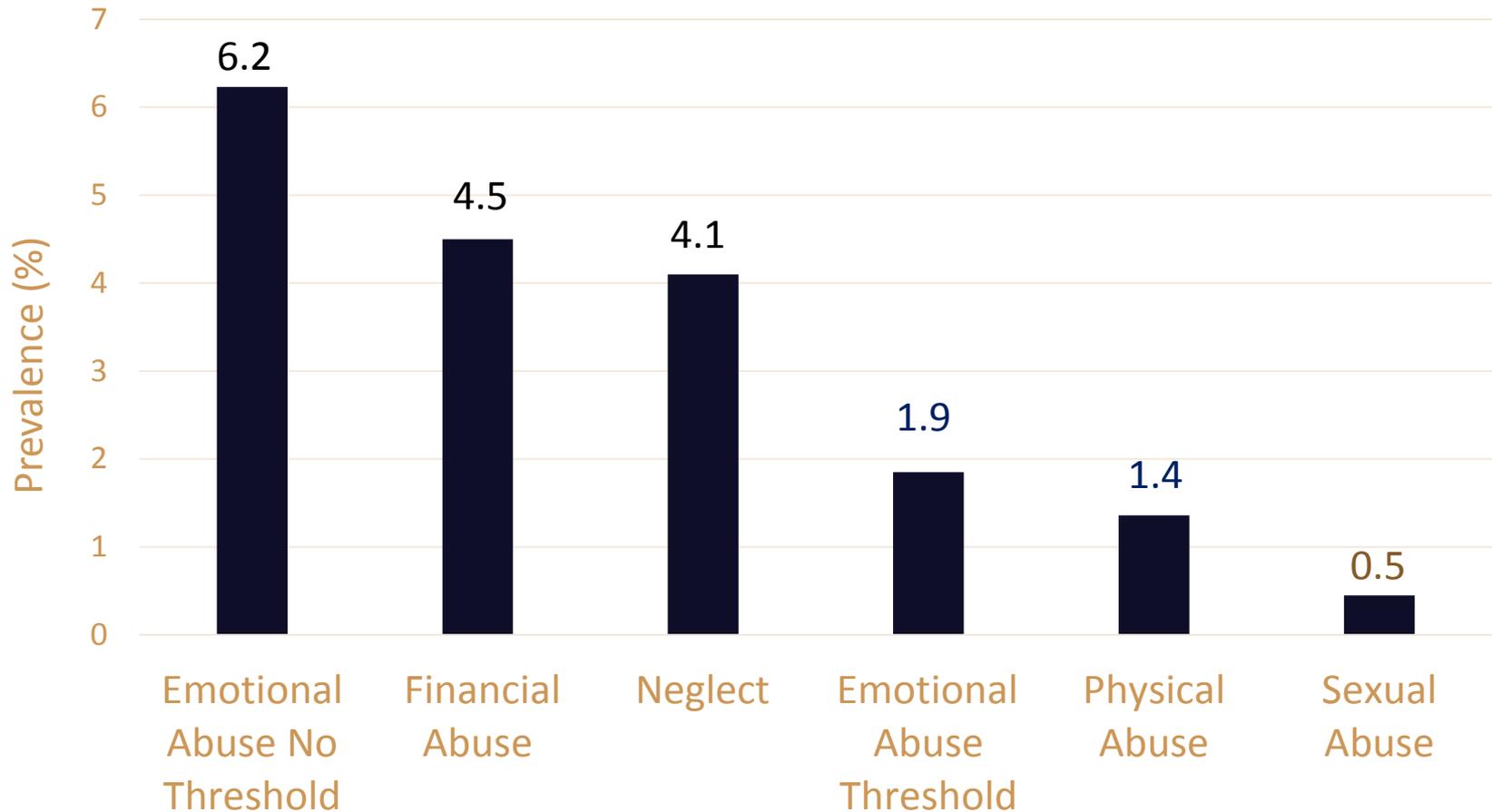
18 studies

- Nigeria
- United States
- Portugal
- Ireland
- Lithuania
- Finland
- Belgium
- India
- Greece
- Austria
- Italy
- Israel
- United Kingdom
- Germany
- Netherlands
- Spain
- China
- Sweden
- Canada
- Mexico

Global One-Year Elder Mistreatment Prevalence



One-Year Elder Mistreatment Prevalence in U.S.



OVERALL ELDER MISTREATMENT PREVALENCE

All Studies

- Global: 14.3%
- U.S.: 9.5%

Studies Using Emotional Abuse Threshold Criteria

- Global: 7.1%
- U.S.: 7.6%

Underestimated Prevalence

- Underreporting among elders
- Excluded cognitive impairment
- Excluded older adults in institutional settings

PREVALENCE STUDIES

Elder maltreatment (EM) measured as a dichotomous/binary outcome

NO

YES

PREVALENCE STUDIES

NO

YES

YES

MOVE TOWARD UNDERSTANDING EM IN TERMS OF “SEVERITY”

As a phenomenon, EM exists with tremendous variation in severity

- Victim’s subjective appraisal of severity
- Frequency of mistreatment behaviors
- Multiplicity of behaviors within a given mistreatment type
- Multiplicity between mistreatment types (polyvictimization)

Research Article

Elder Abuse Severity: A Critical but Understudied Dimension of Victimization for Clinicians and Researchers

David Burnes, PhD,^{*1} Karl Pillemer, PhD,² and Mark S. Lachs, MD, MPH³

¹University of Toronto, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, Toronto, Ontario. ²Department of Human Development, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. ³Weill Cornell Medical College, Cornell University, New York.

*Address correspondence to David Burnes, PhD, University of Toronto, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, Room 338, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V4, Canada. E-mail: david.burnes@utoronto.ca

Based on data from large-scale, population-based New York State Elder Mistreatment Prevalence Study – a random sample of EM victims

Capture Full Spectrum in Variation of Frequency/Multiplicity Severity for each EM Type

One behavior event in past year



Multiple behavior types once in past year



YES



Event since age 60 but none in past year



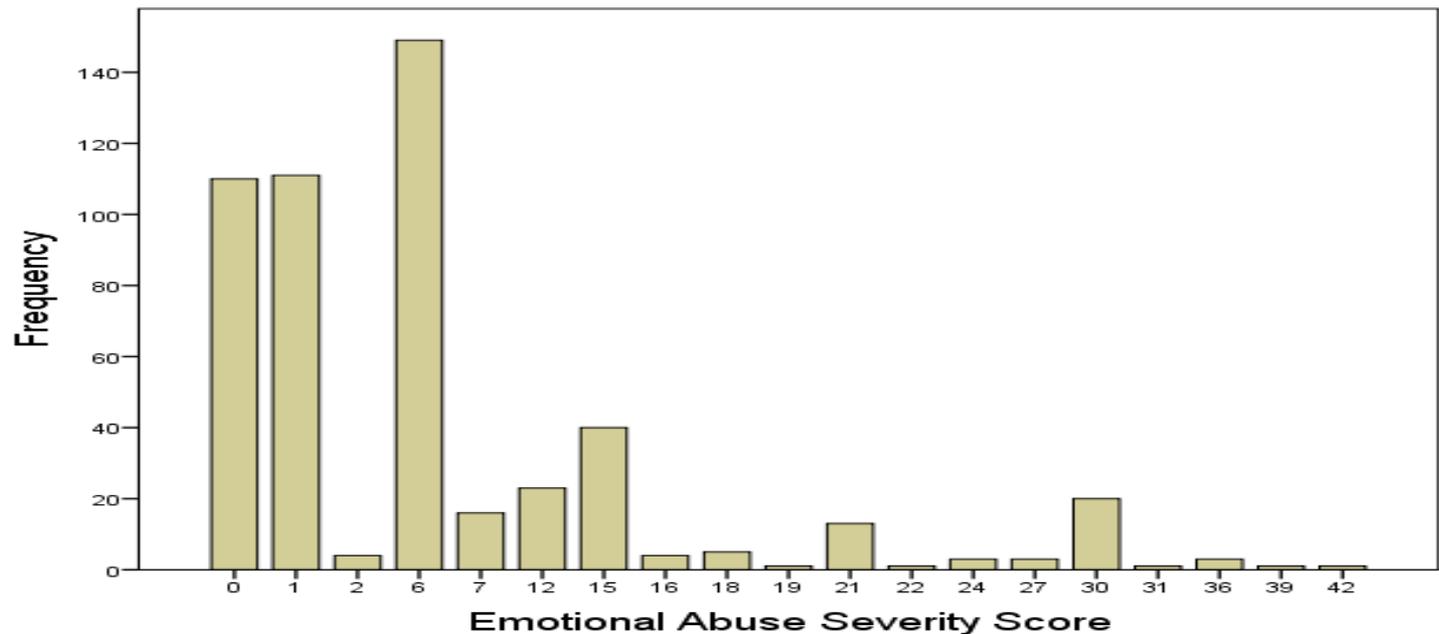
One behavior several times in past year



Multiple behavior types several times in past year

Distribution of Emotional Abuse Severity Scores

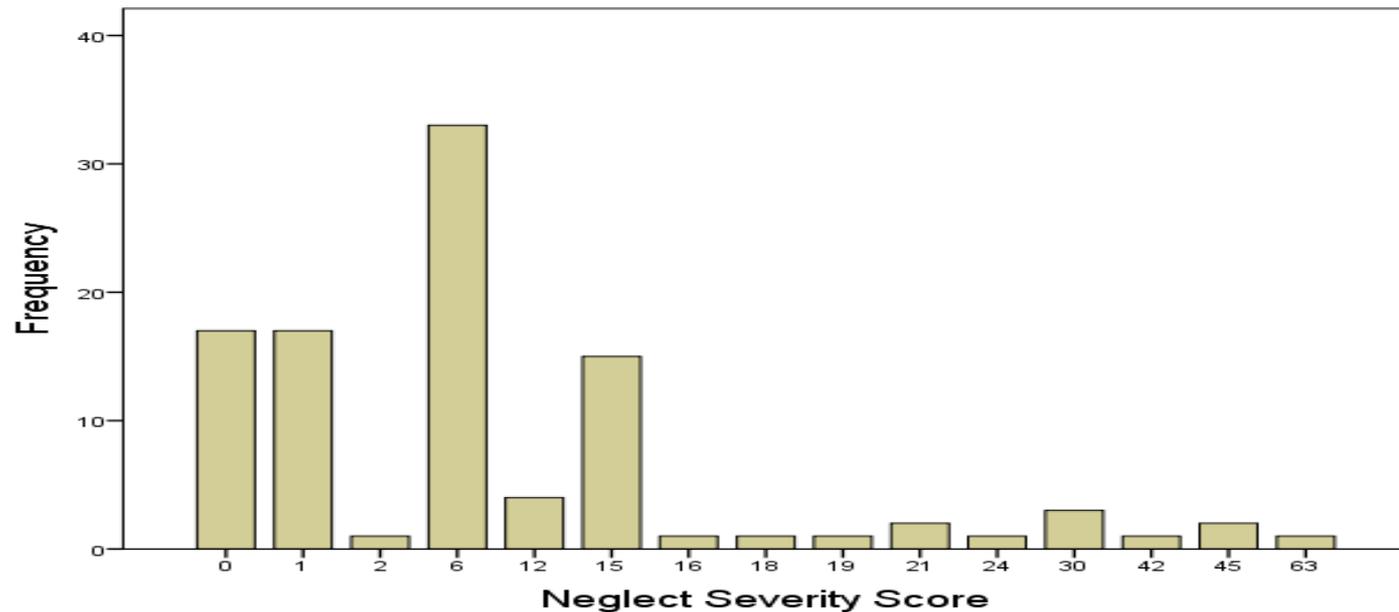
N = 509 (12.2%)



- Distribution of severity scores across cases was positively/right skewed (not normal)
- Mean: 2 to 10 mistreatment events per year
- 2-10 times past year (33.2%)
- >10 times past year (23.4%)

Distribution of Neglect Severity Scores

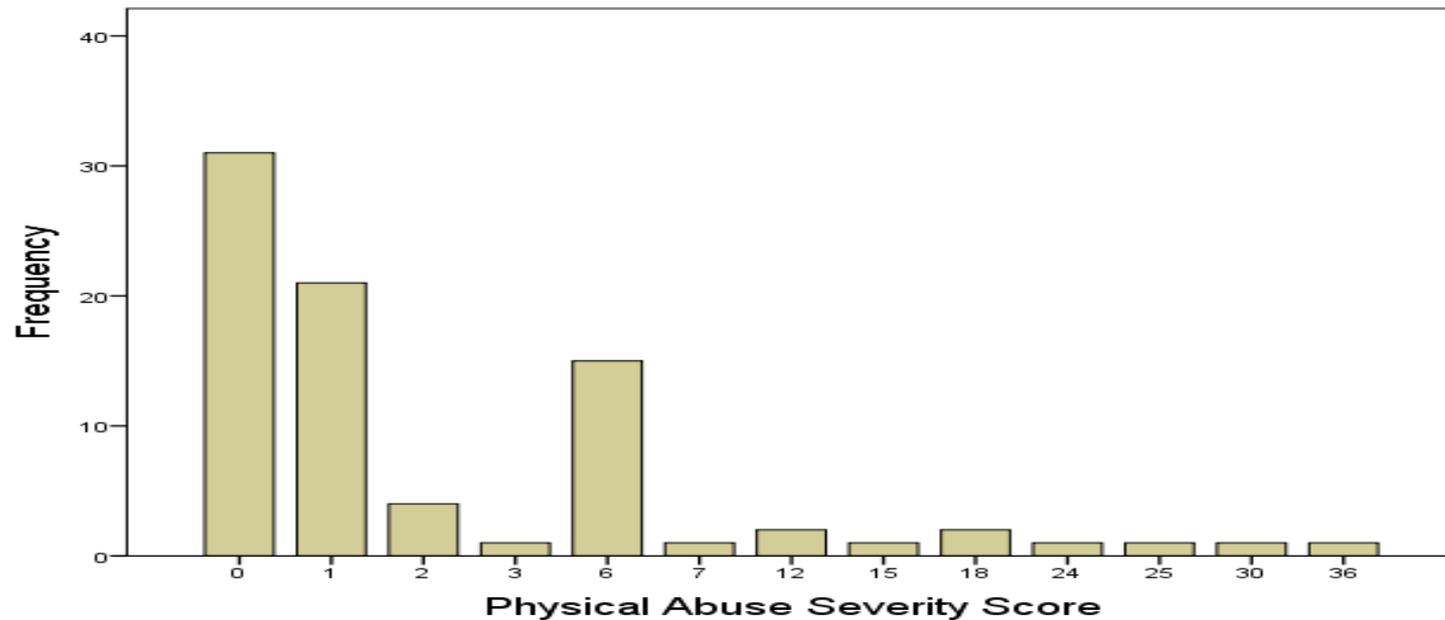
N = 109 (2.6%)



- Distribution of severity scores across cases was positively/right skewed (not normal)
- Mean: 2 to 10 neglectful events per year
- 2-10 times past year (34%)
- >10 times past year (32%)

Distribution of Physical Abuse Severity Scores

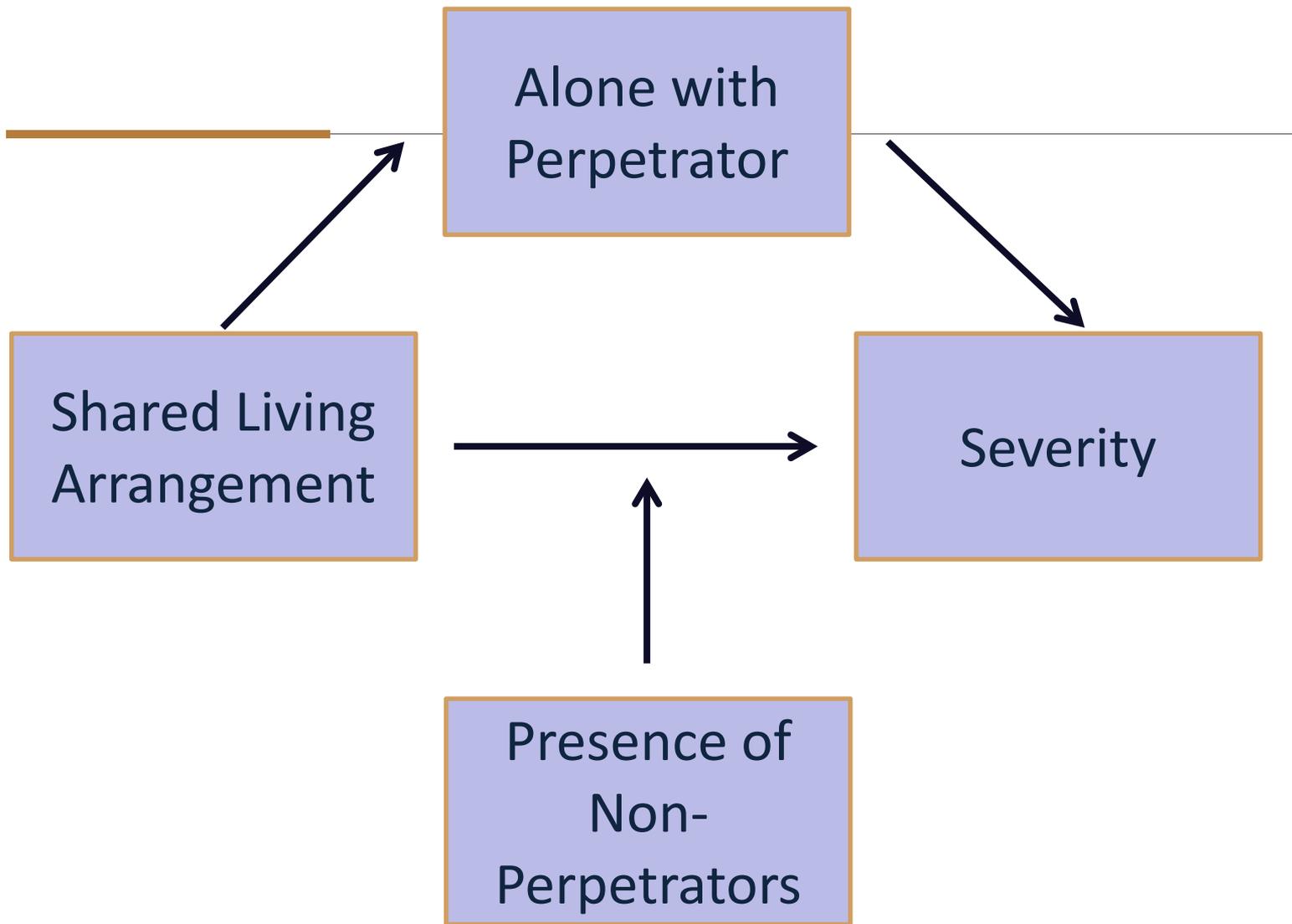
N = 89 (2.1%)



- Distribution positively/right skewed (not normal)
- Mean: 1 to 2 mistreatment events per year
- Once past year (26%)
- 2-10 times past year (26%)
- >10 times past year (11%)

Predictors of Mistreatment Severity

Emotional	Physical	Neglect
Younger Age	Younger Age	Younger Age
Living <u>Alone</u> w/Perpetrator	Living <u>Alone</u> w/Perpetrator	Living <u>Alone</u> w/Perpetrator
Higher Education		Lower Education
Hispanic		Lower Income
		Functional Impairment



Original Article

Varying Appraisals of Elder Mistreatment Among Victims: Findings from a Population-Based Study

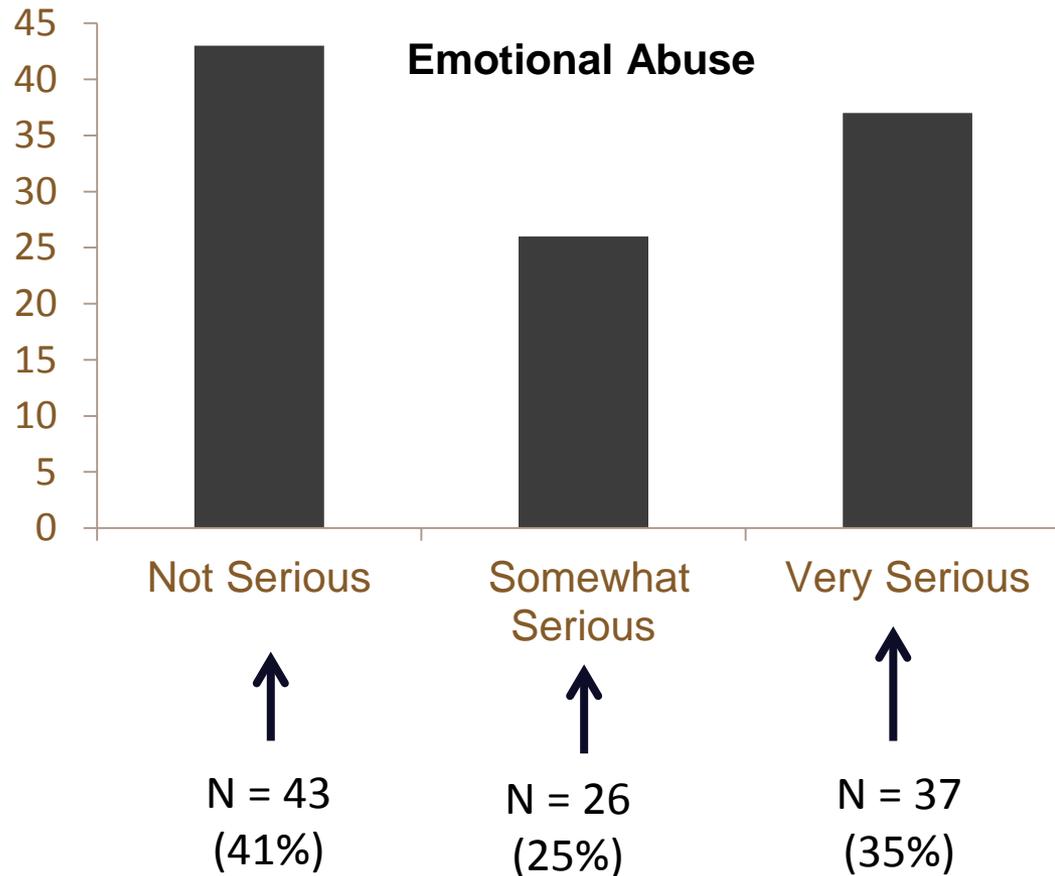
David Burnes,¹ Mark S. Lachs,² Denise Burnette,³ and Karl Pillemer⁴

¹Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, ²Weill Cornell Medical College, Cornell University, New York City, ³School of Social Work, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, ⁴Department of Human Development, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

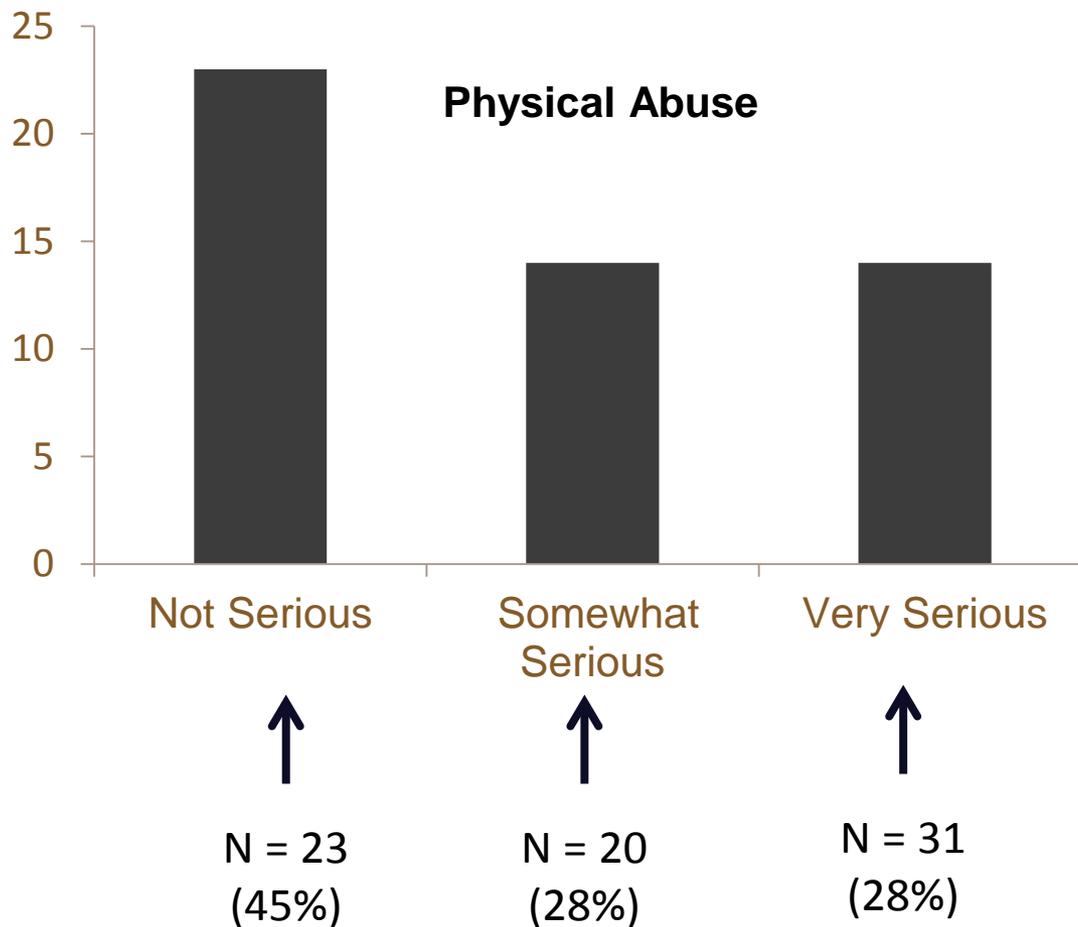
Correspondence should be addressed to David Burnes, PhD, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, 246 Bloor Street West, Room 338, Toronto, ON M5S1V4, Canada. E-mail: david.burnes@utoronto.ca

Based on data from the large-scale, population-based New York State Elder Mistreatment Prevalence Study – a random sample of EM victims

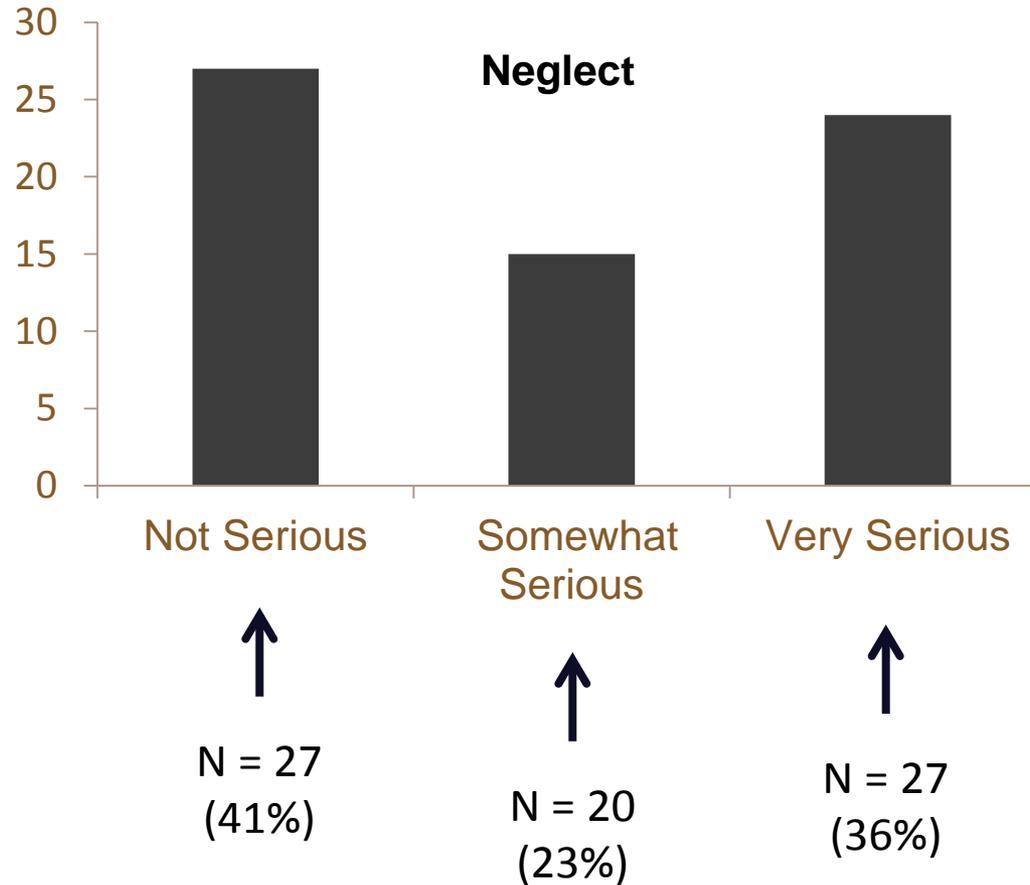
Emotional: N = 106 older adults who reported 10 or more emotional abuse events in past year (CTS items)



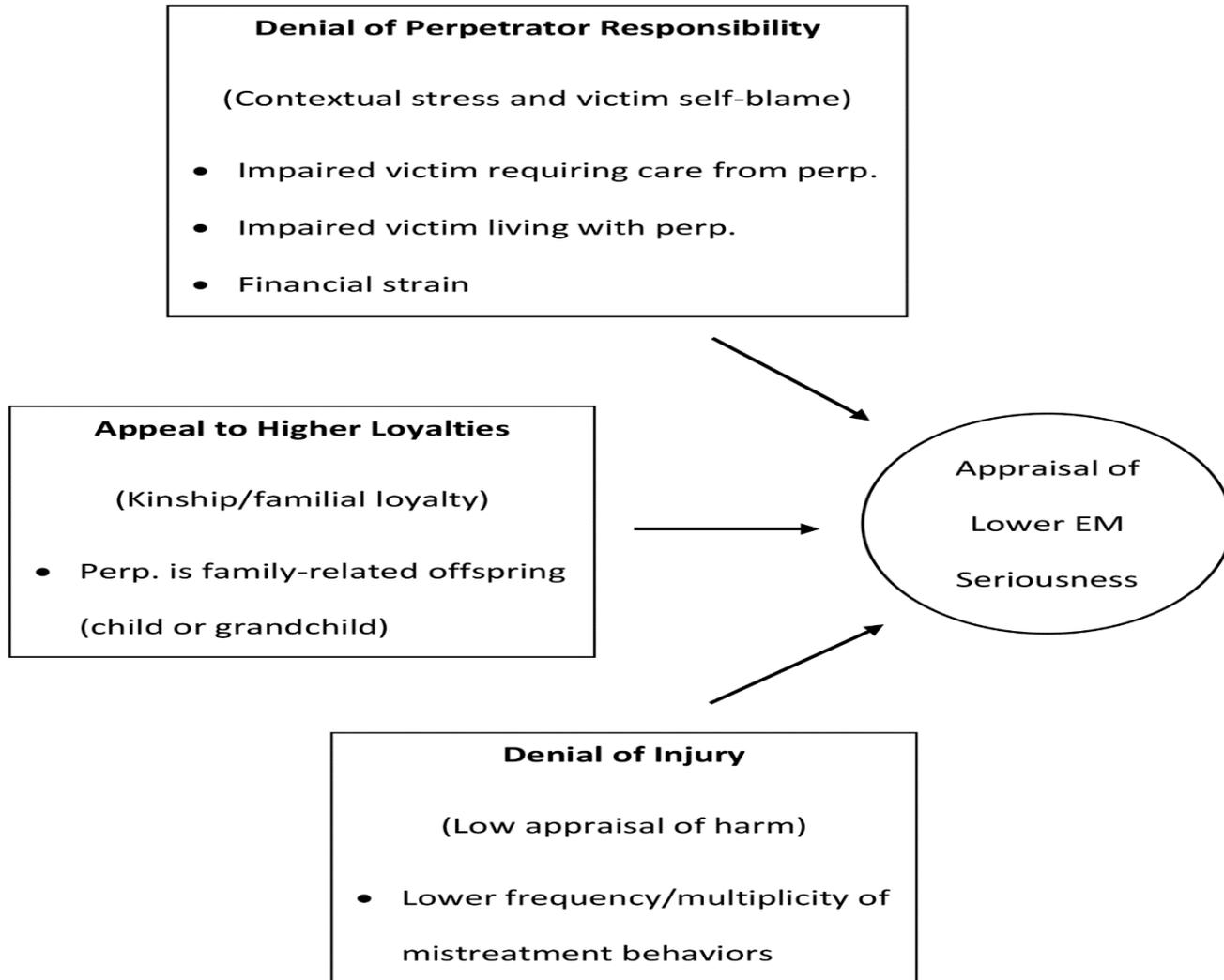
Physical: N = 51 older adults who reported at least one physical abuse event in past year based on CTS items



Neglect: N = 66 older adults who reported at least 2 to 10 neglectful events in past year



Neutralization Theory



What predicts subjective appraisals?

Emotional	Physical	Neglect
Frequency of mistreatment behavior(s)	Frequency of mistreatment behavior(s) ⁺	Frequency of mistreatment behavior(s)
Victim-perpetrator relationship type		Victim-perpetrator relationship type
Victim-perpetrator living arrangement		
Functional capacity x dependence		
Victim age		Victim gender

Key Message

Severity offers a different framework through which to understand the problem of elder mistreatment

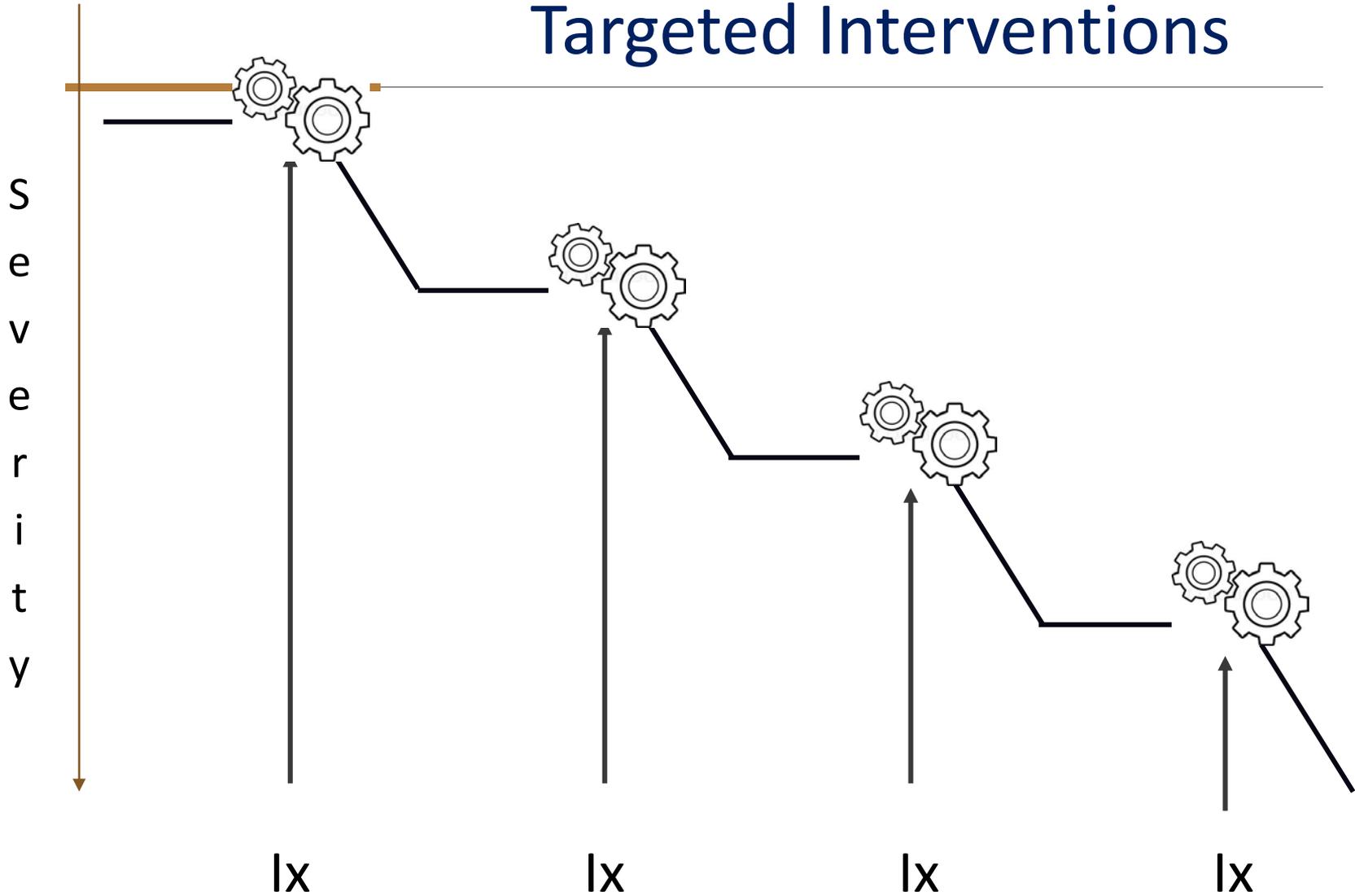
What are some implications for research and practice?

CLINICAL PRACTICE

Consistent with the way clinicians and clients intervene with the problem of EM

- We rarely completely extricate a victim from their EM situation
- Idea of “complete” case resolution or “elimination” of the problem is not often realistic or desired by the older adult
- Clinicians are not looking to move a case from a “yes” to “no” status
- Binary conceptualization is not how clinicians think

Targeted Interventions



RESEARCH/EVALUATION/MEASUREMENT



100 | | | | | | | 0



↑
T1

↑
T2

100



0

Severity Measure

- Subjective victim appraisal
- Frequency
- Multiplicity
- Duration
- Intensity
- Specific nature of behavior
- Intrusiveness
- Extent of injury
- Fatality
- Age

WHY FOCUS ON SEVERITY?

Varying severity is predictive of adverse outcomes

Victims enduring more frequent and varied mistreatment behaviors more likely to experience:

- **Poor mental health** (depression, anxiety)
- **Poor physical health** (digestive, bone and joint, high blood pressure, heart, lung, # of reported health conditions)
- **Chronic pain**

(Fisher et al., 2011)

WHY SEVERITY?

- More accurately reflects EM phenomena as they exist in reality
- Captures heterogeneity in lived EM experiences
- Aligns with way clinicians approach the problem in interventions
- Provides more sensitive framework through which to measure changes in EM status

Funding Acknowledgements

Research has been supported by—

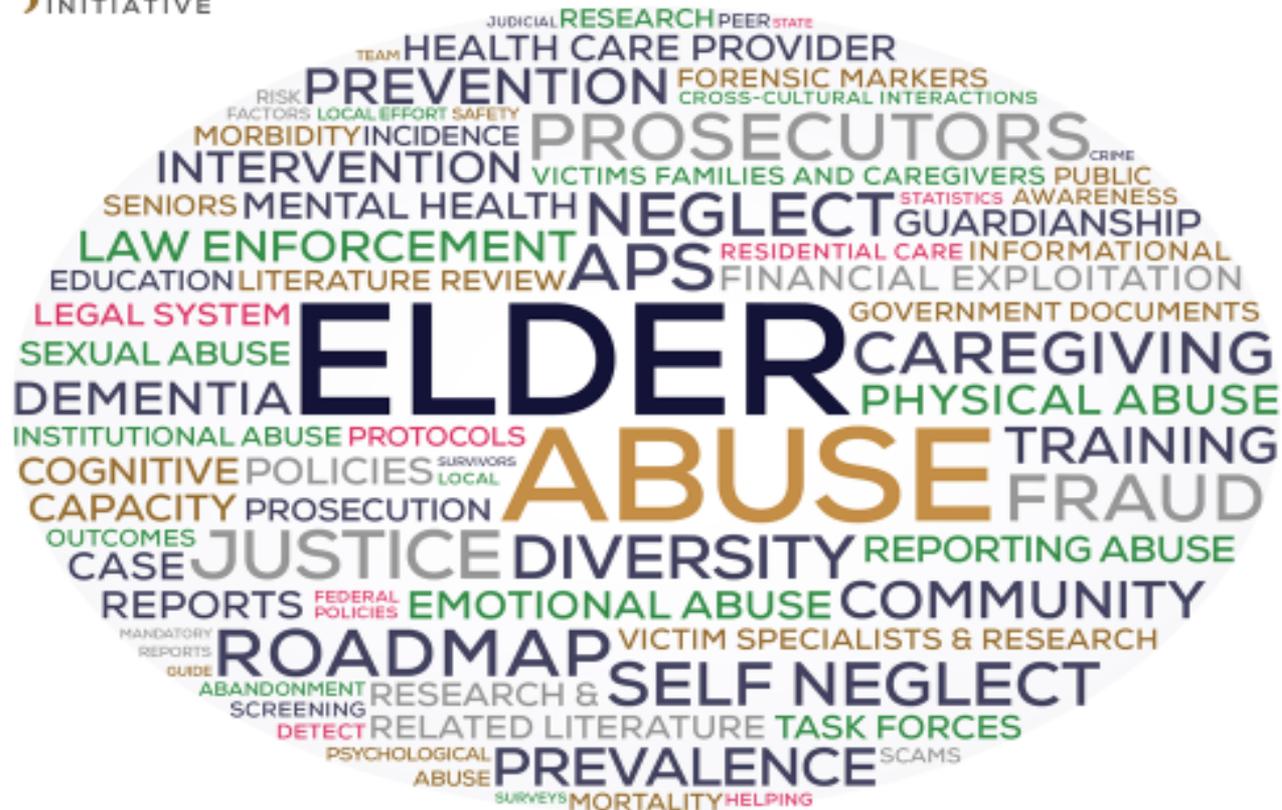
- New York State William B. Hoyt Memorial Children and Family Trust Fund
- New York State Office of Children and Family Services
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- Elder Justice Foundation



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Questions & Suggestions

Suggestions can be emailed to
elder.justice@usdoj.gov



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