Elder Abuse

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WARNING:
You are about to be challenged.
Challenging Goals

- Imagine elder abuse
- Ponder elder abuse
- Take it beyond a sad fact and understand it as the trauma it really is
- Acknowledge its existence
- Believe this:
  - Anyone can be a victim
  - Anyone can be a perpetrator
What do we mean by “elder abuse”? 
Reportable Abuse: California

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Financial Abuse
- Neglect
- Self-Neglect
- Abandonment
- Abduction
- Psychological (optional report)

Welfare and Institutions Code 15610
Let’s go through a few examples.

These examples are based on real cases.
Examples of Financial Abuse

• A 55 year old woman threatens her mother with placement in a nursing home if she doesn’t buy her a car.

• A 30 year old man befriends a widow who is feeling lonely & depressed. He obtains the password for her ATM card so he can “help” her buy groceries and then “helps” himself to extra cash.
Examples of Physical Abuse

• Pulling hair
• Throwing food, objects
• Denying access to pain medication
• Slapping/hitting/punching
Explanation of Neglect

• Failure of the caregiver to provide appropriate care
  – Food, clothing, and shelter
  – Medical care
  – Personal hygiene
  – Health and safety hazards
Examples of Neglect

• Person is lying in urine and feces for hours or days
• Person is dirty, has elongated nails and matted hair, is living in filth
• Person becomes malnourished and dehydrated because food and water are not provided
• Person develops deep, open pressure sores (down to her bones) on her back and heels because no one repositions her
How common is elder abuse?

It’s a good question, but a hard one to answer.
Why is it hard to answer?

• Reluctance to admit
  – Shame
  – Fear of losing independence
  – Fear of being moved

• Unlike kids, older adults can quietly disappear from society without much inquiry

• May be too incapacitated to report

• Signs of abuse may be missed/mistaken for “usual aging”
So here’s our best guess but we know it is an underestimate.

The National Elder Abuse Incidence Study published in 1998 attempted to quantify the problem.
Elder Abuse - National Incidence

• 236,000 reports of seniors abused at home in one year

• 50,000 reports of abuse in nursing homes in one year

National Elder Abuse Incidence Study, 1998
Elder Abuse Incidence

FOR EVERY REPORT OF ABUSE....

5 GO UNREPORTED

National Elder Abuse Incidence Study, 1998
That means at least one million seniors were abused in 1998.

Now let’s look at what is happening to the numbers of seniors in the United States.
Number of people age 65 and over, by age group, selected years 1900-2000 and projected 2010-2050

Note: Data for 2010-2050 are projections of the population.
Reference population: These data refer to the resident population.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census and Projections.
Why have a special category for elders?
Dementia as a Special Issue

- Alzheimer’s Disease is the most common type of dementia
- Dementia is typified by memory loss and other problems with thinking/cognition
- Dementia gets more common as we age
  - Over the age of 65, about 3-5%
  - Over the age of 85, about 40-50%
Dementia and Abuse

- May be unable to report abuse
- May not be believed
- May be unable to recognize abuse
Why is this happening?

- Mental Illness?
- Violent society?
- Entitlement?
- Stress?
- Power and control?
- Ageism?
Questions to Ponder

• What is our responsibility as family members? As neighbors/friends?
• What is our responsibility as a society?
• What role could/should the government play in this issue?
• What policies currently exist that either allow or prevent elder abuse?
Vulnerabilities to Mistreatment

- Difficulty defending oneself, physically and emotionally
- May be more dependent on others for assistance than in the past
- Fear of losing independence if a report is made, so more susceptible to threats
Why Is this important?
Why should you care?
Number of people age 65 and over, by age group, selected years 1900-2000 and projected 2010-2050

Note: Data for 2010-2050 are projections of the population.
Reference population: These data refer to the resident population.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census and Projections.
Some day this could be you.

– Anyone can be a victim
– Anyone can be a perpetrator
Get Mad

Learn More

Get Involved

Join Elder PEACE

www.centeronelderabuse.org