



# Indicators of Institutional Abuse of Older Persons

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# Elder Abuse: a global phenomenon

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- 2<sup>nd</sup> World Assembly on Ageing  
Madrid<sub>(2002)</sub>
- International Plan of Action on Ageing:  
'elimination of violence and  
discrimination against older persons'
- International Network for the  
Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA)
- World Report on Violence and Health:  
World Health Organisation



# Institutional Abuse of Older Persons

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- The numbers of older persons in nursing homes is increasing worldwide
- They are more vulnerable to abuse due to dependency, difficulty reporting abuse and fear
- SILENCE: the dominant response of staff in nursing homes, who are aware of abuse



# Elder Abuse in Institutions

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- There are different aspects to elder abuse in the home:
  - Expectation of standards of care*
  - Different judgements about violating personal boundaries*
  - The organisational context*
- There is something more than individual behaviour



# Institutional Abuse of Older Persons

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- Abuse of the person is common, but the commonest abuse of all is institutional abuse, where the environment, practices, and rules become abusive in themselves

Decalmer, P. (1993)



# Institutional Abuse of Older Persons: causation

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- Structural  
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- Environmental  
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- Individual characteristics  
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- Work style
- Attitudes towards older people and the work of caring
- Buildings, facilities, staffing and responses to the environment
- Staff and resident characteristics
- Staffing and management styles and their responses



# Elder Abuse: definition

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- *Type* or category of abuse
- *Behaviour* of the abuser; actions of abuse; clear manifestations of abuse
- *Indicators*; signs and symptoms; effects of abuse; Suspected abuse



# Elder Abuse: types/behaviour

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- Physical abuse
  - Hit, shake, hit with object, *restrain*, misuse medication
- Psychological abuse/emotional abuse
  - Use abusive language; ignore;
  - Forcing person to unwanted sexual activity; rape, harassment, voyeurism; Abuse when giving intimate, personal care
- Sexual abuse: sexual contact without consent or with person incapable of consenting



# Elder Abuse: types/behaviour

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- Financial: illegal or inappropriate use of funds, property, assets
- Neglect: refusal or failure to provide services and care
- Theft of money property; take money by coercion, deception; force to change a Will
- Denial of care and supervision; failure to provide food, shelter, clothing, medical care and care of living area



# Indicators of Elder Abuse

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- **Older person says harm is occurring:**

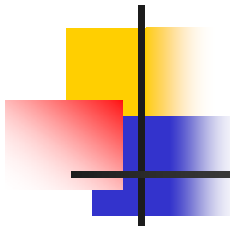
this should not be discounted as an indicator of abuse, but investigated

# Indicators of Elder Abuse:

## physical

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- Bruises, abrasions, lacerations, skin tears
- Fractures, sprains, dislocations
- Burns
- Human bite marks
- Eye injuries, missing or broken teeth, fractures of jaw bones
- Unexplained scars, internal injuries
- Effects of restraint: agitation, depression, immobility, pressure sores,
- Sedation, confusion, falls exacerbation of symptoms due to misuse of medication



# Indicators of Elder Abuse: psychological

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- Emotional upset, agitation, depression, disrupted appetite and sleeping patterns
- Helplessness, hopelessness, withdrawal
- Fear, anxiety, shame, tearfulness
- Avoidance of contact with family or friends
- Ambivalent feelings towards abuser
- Fear in presence of abuser
- *Self Neglect*

# Indicators of Elder Abuse:

## sexual



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- Genital injuries
- Human bit marks
- Trauma (bruising, bleeding, scarring, redness, irritation, pain) about the genitals, breasts, rectum, mouth
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Presence of sexually transmitted disease
- Extreme discomfort or upset when bathed, toileted or undergarments changed
- Torn, stained or bloody undergarments



# Indicators of Elder Abuse: financial

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- Missing property, possessions
- Unpaid bills despite financial resources
- Excessive interest in financial affairs by another person
- Unusual or uncharacteristic banking transactions: large withdrawals, suspicious signatures
- Legal transactions by an older person who is confused, sudden changes to Wills
- Fear, worry talking about money, loss of trust



# Indicators of Elder Abuse

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- Staff-patient conflict in institutional care
- Staff burn-out is a significant variable predictive of physical and psychological abuse
- Abuse of staff by residents
- Resident to resident abuse



# Indicators of Elder Abuse: application in practice

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- Importance of multidisciplinary assessment to out rule other causes of symptoms, signs
- The value of tools depends on practitioner's skill in applying them
- Gathering information from older person: evaluate their ability to share information and help them to do so
- Use interviewing techniques to learn the older person's perspective and the meaning attached to the signs of abuse