



# Research on mistreatment of older adults in Quebec:

summaries of scientific articles



## Elder Abuse: Levels of Scientific Knowledge in Quebec.

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### REFERENCE

Beaulieu, M. (1992a). Elder Abuse: Levels of Scientific Knowledge in Quebec. *Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect*, 4(1-2), 135-149.

### TEXT TYPE

**Format:** Scientific article

**Content:** The state of Quebec's research field

### DISCUSSED THEMES

Definition, extent of the phenomenon, forms of abuse in nursing home networks, factors of vulnerabilities, perpetrator of abuse, consequences, factors that prevent people from denouncing, explanatory theories, screening, intervention, organization of services, associations of seniors.

### GOAL OR RESEARCH QUESTION

This article wants to critically examine the current knowledge on the subject of elder abuse against seniors allowed by the research in Quebec, while offering recommendations for the future.

### PROBLEM

In the late 70s, during the symposium on violence organized by the Quebec's Ministry of Justice, elder abuse was defined as a social problem for the first time. The research in the field of elder abuse has multiplied in Quebec during the last decade and several symposia, conferences and others on this topic have taken place since 1989. However, as there is no consensus around the concept of elder abuse, it becomes difficult to generalize the results of an individual experience. Uncertainty surrounds therefore the assessment of the consequences and the abuse rate in the province.

### METHODOLOGY

This article is based on a historical perspective, but no methodology is specified.

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## RESULTS

Studies on victimization and fear of crime have highlighted the sense of vulnerability and helplessness of seniors towards criminal acts as well as the consequent isolation. There is more than 30% of people over the age of 60 would have been victims of a criminal act. A study specifically on the elder abuse in nursing homes has shown that several of them do not dare denounce the situations of violence because they fear the consequences. It would appear also that in these homes, loss of control of their lives and the unsatisfactory relations contribute more to victimize seniors than crimes themselves. Finally, although present in the network of nursing homes, elder abuse often comes from members of the family and is in the form of psychological abuse for the majority of the victims.

## DISCUSSION

The province of Quebec has first allowed to broaden the definition of elder abuse by considering not only the criminal acts listed in the Criminal Code, but also any other action detrimental to the quality of life of an older adult. In this context, studies have highlighted the importance to transcend the dynamic between the perpetrator of abuse and the victim and rather look at situations as a whole that affect the lives of seniors, whether to an individual or to society. In response to epidemiologists, the author mentions that elder abuse can be defined as a social problem in Quebec, because its prevalence was successfully identified. In addition, thanks to the use of study groups, the phenomenon was defined as a real social problem from a seniors perspective.

## CONCLUSION

Research in Quebec has brought us knowledge on the attitudes and reactions of seniors toward crimes. Research has also helped to discover different forms of elder abuse in the community, in the family and in nursing homes. Researchers have managed to bring out the fear of crime among seniors and its impact in their lives. The observation of seniors living in nursing homes raises several questions in relation to their role and their power over their own lives. The study of institutional abuse also allows to enhance the definition of the phenomenon from the staff perspective working in these nursing homes, encouraging them to actively contribute to social change.

## AVENUES FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

The author proposes three aspects to be prioritized in applied research. First, it must integrate research and practice in order to develop experimental programs. Then, it is essential to conduct a scientific study on the institutional abuse and to assess the decision-making power of the older adult and her/his family in order to make changes in management and current practices. Finally, to define the socio-political priorities with regard to elder abuse, research must focus on the incidence and prevalence of this phenomenon, the long-term bio psychosocial impacts on the victims as well as causes and the profile of perpetrators of elder abuse.

## DRAFTING DATE

August 21, 2013

