



Research on mistreatment of older adults in Quebec:

summaries of scientific articles

Abused Older Adults: An Invisible Problem?

REFERENCE

Monfette, D. and Vézina, J. (1991).
Abused Older Adults: An Invisible Problem? *Le Médecin du Québec*, 26(6), 55-62.

TEXT TYPE

Format: Scientific article
Content: Literature review

DISCUSSED THEMES

Definition, extent of the phenomenon, forms of mistreatment at home and in institutions, risk factors, vulnerabilities, profile of the abused person, perpetrators of mistreatment, consequences, barriers to reporting, detection, intervention, burden and stress, signs of mistreatment.

GOAL OR RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this article is to identify the problem of violence against older people, as well as to identify both the characteristics of the victims and the perpetrators.

PROBLEM

Violence against older people is a problem still little known, but whose prevalence is increasing. The extent of the problem would be somewhere between four and ten per cent of the senior population, according to studies. In Quebec, this violence against older people has been more formally recognized as the result of two specific events: the report *Vieillir... en toute liberté* (Aging ... Freely) published in 1989 and the symposium *Vieillir sans violence* (Aging without Violence) that took place at the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM) in October 1990.

METHODOLOGY

No methodology section is presented in this article.

RESULTS

Violence against older adults may take various forms: physical abuse, neglect, psychological abuse and financial or material abuse. Older women aged 75 years and over and with a level of high dependency for care and/or cognitive impairments are more at risk of being victims of violence. In addition, alcoholism, social isolation, ongoing family conflict, history of violence, loyalty, greater tolerance and unrealistic expectations are part of the common characteristics among the victims. In turn, the perpetrator is often a close relative. The inexperience or the lack of knowledge, the financial difficulties, stress, drug addiction, alcoholism, mental or emotional illness, as well as social isolation, exhaustion and the history of violence are major risk factors. The doctor may detect several signs of abuse by observing both the behaviour of the older person and the caregiver during the interview.

Violence against older people is a phenomenon that can also take place in institutions, and be perpetrated by practitioners, family members, peers or even through internal policies of certain institutions. In addition to vigilance and awareness, greater attention must be paid to the training plan, detection and the development of interventions.

DISCUSSION

The discussion is included with the results above.

CONCLUSION

This article has helped to better define the problem of violence against older people as well as the different risk factors. Clinically, it is necessary to know the characteristics of perpetrators and victims and to observe the different signs of abuse in order to detect the case and intervene as quickly as possible.

AVENUES FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Two tables are included in the text. The first underlines the profiles of victims and perpetrators, and the second shows the different signs of abuse and their causes. They can be used for health professionals, including physicians, who are involved in a situation of violence toward older people.

DRAFTING DATE

June 30, 2014

