



Research on mistreatment of older adults in Quebec:

summaries of scientific articles



Most Successful Intervention Strategies for Abused Older Adults.

REFERENCE

Nahmiash, D. & Reis, M. (2000). Most Successful Intervention Strategies for Abused Older Adults. *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect*, 12(3-4), 53-70.

TEXT TYPE

Format: Scientific article

Content: Empirical

DISCUSSED THEMES

Extent of the phenomenon, forms of abuse at home, risk factors, vulnerability factors, detection, intervention.

GOAL OR RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this study is to evaluate intervention strategies used in the context of abuse against older adults.

PROBLEM

An estimated 4% of seniors are victims of abuse or neglect in North America. Several studies have put forward that caregivers are often the perpetrators of the abuse. However, few intervention strategies have been the object of evaluation in relation to this specific aspect of the problem. Although progress has been made with regard to prevention and to the development of intervention programs, few studies have investigated how these strategies are accepted by the concerned individuals and with their degrees of success.

METHODOLOGY

This study is part of the CARE Project, which takes place in two local community service centers in Montreal. It is carried out on the basis of 83 cases of abuse implicating clients aged 55 or older and receiving care or services from an unpaid caregiver on a regular basis. The caregiver must be the author of the abuse. Home visits are carried out, following which the *Indicators of Abuse checklist* (IOA) is completed. Then, an intervention plan is developed using the *Abuse Intervention Description* (AID). At the end of the intervention, the success of each strategy is evaluated by consensus of 3 to 5 members of a multidisciplinary team. Content analysis is then performed with the collected information.

RESULTS

It is estimated that 80% of intervention strategies are successful or partially successful, while 20% are not. The best accepted categories of intervention and the ones having the highest success rates are, in the following order: general medical strategies, care and rehabilitation strategies focused on informal caregivers, concrete strategies concerning home care for the victims of abuse and strategies to increase the social support of the elder. In contrast, strategies aimed at engaging the older adult in community activities are not as well accepted and are less successful. Finally, it must be noted that a large proportion of strategies (23%) could not be assessed in the context of the study because they were still in progress after 4 months.

DISCUSSION

It is not surprising that medical strategies and those focused on home care are best accepted, since health is a priority issue for seniors. Involvement of family and social services assistants is also very well received. These results indicate that multidisciplinary teams focused on home care have a better chance of experiencing success with diverse clienteles. The success of interventions focused on the informal caregiver is surprising, because one might have expected refusal to participate on their part. The fact that individual support strategies are more successful than group strategies has been confirmed by another Canadian study. Given the poor success of strategies involving a team of experts, we can assume that practitioners need encouragement and training and that seniors should be more directly involved in such strategies. Interventions focused on addiction also experience little success, which is consistent with the well-known difficulty in motivating addicts to enter and persist in a process of change. The results of the study are limited, however, by the fact that several strategies have not been evaluated and that only cases where seniors were abused by their informal caregivers were considered.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the AID appears to be a useful tool to document and evaluate intervention strategies used in cases of abuse by the caregiver. The best accepted and most successful strategies are those relating to health care, those concerned with support of the abused elder, and those that are focused on the informal caregiver inflicting the abuse. Referral of the elder victim to community activities proves to be unsuccessful. Strategies involving recourse to the opinion of an expert committee or aimed at intervention with drug addicts are infrequent in the CARE project.

AVENUES FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Further studies could confirm the degree of success of the different types of intervention strategies used in a variety of cases of abuse, with different intervention parameters and with a culturally diverse clientele. Practitioners and researchers are encouraged to continue to use the AID to assess the strategies used for prevention of and intervention in cases of abuse. In addition, intervention strategies should be offered not only to the elderly victims of abuse, but also to caregivers who abuse.

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July 10, 2013

