



## Research on mistreatment of older adults in Quebec:

summaries of scientific articles



### Fatal Neglect of the Elderly by a Spouse: A Case Report.

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#### REFERENCE

Sauvageau, A. & Racette, S. (2006). Fatal Neglect of the Elderly by a Spouse: a Case Report. *Medicine, Science, and the Law*, 46(2), 173-176.

#### TEXT TYPE

**Format:** Scientific article

**Content:** Case study

#### DISCUSSED THEMES

Definition, magnitude of the phenomenon, forms of mistreatment in community settings, risk factors, profile of the abused person, perpetrators of abuse, consequences.

#### GOAL OR RESEARCH QUESTION

The article focuses on an unusual case of neglect where an elderly man was left on the ground for several days after a fall, which ultimately cost him his life. His wife had never contacted the emergency services.

#### PROBLEM

Mistreatment of older adults is divided into six categories: physical, sexual, neglect, emotional, financial and violation of rights. It appears to affect between 3-10% of people 65 years and older. It seems, however, that the reported cases of abuse may be a small fraction of all existing cases. Neglect is one of the most common forms of abuse against the elderly.

#### METHODOLOGY

No methodology section is presented in this article.

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## RESULTS

The case which is reported is that of a 69 year old man who was left lying on the ground by his wife after a fall. This man, with diabetes mellitus, reportedly died from hyperglycemia four days after the incident. His wife had fed and cared for him in the position he was in, lying on the ground, but had not administered his insulin. Although this is a negligent homicide under the law, legal procedures have not been instituted since it was deemed that the wife did not want to hurt her husband and was not fully aware of how dangerous the situation was, due to her psychological problems.

## DISCUSSION

This case is not typical, as most cases of neglect occur in long-term care facilities. Although the wife of the man did not intend to hurt him, she failed to give him his insulin dose and did not contact the emergency services following the incident. She argues that her husband told her he was fine and he did not want her to go get help. This highlights a new dimension: that of self-neglect. However, in a situation which poses a serious threat to the life of an individual, the failure to seek help constitutes severe medical negligence.

## CONCLUSION

It can be very difficult to discriminate neglect from self-neglect in some situations, as in the one described above.

## AVENUES FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

No avenues for practice or research are made explicit in the article. However, several cases of neglect are described within the text.

## DRAFTING DATE

May 23, 2014

