



Research on mistreatment of older adults in Quebec:

summaries of scientific articles



The Role of the Dentist in Recognizing Elder Abuse.

REFERENCE

Wiseman, M. (2008). The Role of the Dentist in Recognizing Elder Abuse. *Journal Canadian Dental Association*, 74(8), 715-720.

TEXT TYPE

Format: Scientific article

Content: Adaptation of a model

THEMES COVERED

Definition, extent of the phenomenon, forms of abuse in community settings, risk factors, vulnerability factors, profile of the abused person, authors of the abuse, consequences, obstacles to reporting, laws, detection, intervention.

GOAL OR RESEARCH QUESTION

This article presents a review of the issue of elder abuse, as well as an adaptation for dentists of a model to facilitate the detection of cases of abuse which was initially conceived for use by doctors.

PROBLEM

With an aging population, diminished frequency of edentulism, rising disposable income and a better awareness of the importance of oral care, the number of elderly people who will have receive dental care will increase in the coming years. Acts of elder abuse are also more common due to the growing number of seniors.

METHODOLOGY

The author has tailored to the needs of dentists the model which was created by Bomba (2006) as a tool for screening for abuse among seniors to be used by doctors. However, no methodology section is presented in this article.

RESULTS

Although the frequency of abuse is difficult to assess, since many do not report these situations, studies have found that between 2% to 10% of seniors face this type of problem. Elder abuse manifests itself in different forms: physical, emotional, sexual, and financial abuse, and neglect. Dentists can evaluate indications of abuse in their patients by observing their gait, their appearance, their communication skills, well as by examining the region of the head and neck. When approaching the older person with compassion and empathy, the dentist may be able to identify if there is presence of abuse or not. He must, however, use his knowledge to distinguish the signs of abuse from normal tissue fragility due to aging. If he has suspicions, the dentist will first have a private discussion with the senior patient, and then meet with care providers. If necessary, the dentist can then refer the patient to social services. He must notify the authorities if the latter's life is threatened. Although no law specifically addresses the abuse of older adults in Quebec, the Canadian Criminal Code provides protection against fraud and abuse.

DISCUSSION

The discussion is integrated with the results presented above.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, elder abuse is a phenomenon that has become more common with the aging of the population, which renders screening essential in order to protect this population. Dentists are in a position to detect and report cases of abuse, because they see their patients twice a year, in general, and can easily examine the region of the head and neck.

PRACTICE OR RESEARCH AVENUE

The author argues that dentists should use the proposed model to play an active role in the protection of the elderly against abuse.

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