

## Identifying & Resolving Elder Abuse as a Registered Nurse

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### Abstract

Elder abuse is a growing concern in many countries, and as future healthcare professionals, we should educate ourselves on the subject to provide the best care we can to the elderly population within and around our community. This paper examines the types of elder abuse that can be seen while working in the healthcare system. It also explores ways in which a healthcare worker can handle a situation if elder abuse is suspected or witnessed while on the job. This paper will also cover several risk factors associated with elder abuse such as financial dependence on an abuser, social isolation, and cognitive impairment. This paper will investigate the impact of elder abuse on the health of older adults as well as the difficulties in identifying elder abuse as a healthcare professional. Finally, the paper will address whom to contact and inform in the case of an elder abuse situation.

### Identifying & Resolving Elder Abuse as a Registered Nurse

A Registered nurse might see several types of elder abuse while working in the hospital. Some types of elder abuse a Registered nurse may see include physical abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse, and neglect.

Physical elder abuse has to do with physical contact from an individual to the elder person. This can range from a multitude of things like hitting, slapping, or restraining an older adult. A registered nurse may witness the act of physical violence on their patient or notice signs that physical abuse has taken place.

Bruising is an example of physical trauma to the skin that may help a health care professional like a registered nurse identify elder abuse. However, the elderly population is more prone to bruising, so the cause of the bruising should be investigated and not immediately assumed to be elder abuse.

Emotional elder abuse is a type of mistreatment that can have serious and long-lasting effects on older adults. Emotional abuse can take many different forms, including verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, and isolation. It can be difficult to identify emotional abuse, as it often occurs behind closed doors and may not leave visible physical signs such as bruising from physical abuse.

One common form of emotional abuse is verbal abuse, which can involve yelling, swearing, or insulting an older adult. Verbal abuse can cause an older adult to feel afraid, anxious, or depressed, and can lead to a breakdown in communication between the older adult and their caregiver.

Another form of emotional abuse is threats, which can involve threatening to harm an older adult or their loved ones if they do not comply with the abuser's demands. Threats can be particularly effective in controlling older adults, as they may be afraid to speak out or seek help.

Isolation is another form of emotional abuse that can be particularly damaging to older adults. Isolation can involve preventing older adults from seeing their friends or family or preventing them from participating in activities that they enjoy. Isolation can lead to feelings of loneliness and depression, which can have serious physical and mental health consequences.

Emotional abuse can have serious consequences for older adults, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Older adults who experience emotional abuse may also be at increased risk of physical health problems, such as heart disease and stroke. In addition, emotional abuse can lead to a breakdown in the relationship between the older adult and their caregiver, which can make it difficult for the older adult to receive the care and support that they need.

As a registered nurse, it is important to be aware of the signs of emotional abuse and take steps to prevent it. This may involve providing education and support to caregivers and working to create a safe and supportive environment for older adults. If you suspect that an older adult is experiencing emotional abuse, it is important to report it to the appropriate authorities and to take steps to ensure that the older adult is safe and receiving the care and support that they need.

Financial elder abuse refers to the exploitation or mistreatment of older adults, often by family members, caregivers, or other trusted individuals. This type of abuse can take many forms, including theft, fraud, embezzlement, or the misuse of a senior's assets or financial resources. Financial elder abuse is a serious issue that can have devastating consequences for

older adults, including loss of financial security, diminished quality of life, and even physical harm.

Financial abuse can involve things like stealing money or property from older adults or coercing them into giving away their assets. Neglect can involve failing to provide older adults with the care and support that they need, such as failing to provide them with food or medication.

If elder abuse is suspected or witnessed while on the job, a healthcare worker, like a registered nurse, should take immediate action to protect the elderly person from further harm. The first step is to report the abuse to the proper authorities, like the police or Adult Protective Services. They should also document any evidence of the abuse and report it to their supervisor or a higher-up in their organization.

Healthcare workers should also take steps to ensure the safety of the elderly person. This may include removing them from the situation, if possible, or arranging for them to stay with a trusted family member or friend. They should also make sure that the elderly person receives any necessary medical attention.

Healthcare workers need to approach the situation with sensitivity and compassion. Elder abuse can be a difficult and emotional issue, and it's important to treat the elderly person with respect and dignity. Healthcare workers should also be aware of the potential for retaliation from the abuser and take steps to protect themselves as well.

In addition to reporting the abuse, healthcare workers should work to prevent future incidents of elder abuse. This may include educating the elderly person and their family members about the signs of abuse and how to report it. Healthcare workers can also work with community organizations to raise awareness about elder abuse and advocate for better protections for elderly people.

Elder abuse is a growing concern worldwide, and several risk factors can increase the likelihood of abuse. One of the most common risk factors is financial dependence on an abuser. This can occur when an older adult is reliant on a caregiver or family member for financial support, which can lead to financial exploitation or abuse. For example, an abuser may use an older adult's money for their gain or coerce them into giving them access to their financial accounts.

Another risk factor is social isolation, which can make it difficult for an older adult to seek help or report abuse. Isolation can occur when an older adult is living alone or has limited contact with friends and family members. This can make them more vulnerable to abuse, as they may not have anyone to turn to for help or support.

Cognitive impairment is also a risk factor for elder abuse. This can include conditions such as dementia or Alzheimer's disease, which can impair an older adult's ability to make decisions or communicate effectively. Abusers may take advantage of this vulnerability by manipulating or coercing the older adult into giving them access to their finances or other resources.

In conclusion, there are several risk factors associated with elder abuse, including financial dependence, social isolation, and cognitive impairment. It's important to be aware of these risk factors and take steps to prevent elder abuse from occurring. This can include staying connected with older adults, monitoring their financial accounts, and reporting any suspected abuse to the appropriate authorities.

## References

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