



### G45 Homicide in the Elderly— Paris and Its Suburbs, 1996-2001

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Be it intra or extrafamilial, violence against the elderly has become an important source of concern. Surveys suggest that domestic violence and elder abuse and neglect are underestimated. The present study examined the circumstances surrounding homicides in the elderly, and autopsy findings.

As the population of the industrialized countries ages, the problems associated with the care of the elderly increase. Of those, violence against the elderly is an important source of concern. Most surveys indicate that the frequency with which elderly persons are assaulted or abused is likely to be underestimated. Among other forms of violence, domestic elder abuse and neglect has been suggested to be perhaps the most underreported crime. Homicide might be the extreme and most tragic form of abuse and neglect, and therefore may represent an accurate indicator of violence against the elderly. However, medicolegal autopsy-based studies and international comparisons are infrequent.

The aims of this study were to examine the circumstances, demographics, and autopsy findings in homicides involving persons aged 65 years or older, in Paris and its suburbs, between 1996 and 2001.

Results: 99 homicides occurred during the 6-year study period, 23 in 1996, 11 in 1997, 21 in 1998, 15 in 1999, 11 in 2000, and 18 in 2001. There were 59 female victims. The mean age of victims was 77 years, 79 in females (range, 65-97) and 74.5 in males (range, 65-87). There were 18, 24, and 17 females in the 65-74, 75-84, and ≥85 age groups, respectively, and 25, 9, 6 males in these age groups, respectively. 76% of victims were killed in their home. In 43 cases, the perpetrator was unknown to the victim. The murderer was a family member in 28 cases and an acquaintance in 28 cases. The most common motive for homicide was robbery, 40 cases. 30 of those occurred in the victim's home. 7 women were raped. There were 12 homicide-suicides. Disputes involving acquaintances or relatives accounted for approximately 25% of cases. In 12 cases, the perpetrator and motive could not be determined. Among the 99 homicides, 28 were domestic, including 20 intimate partner homicides, with the husband being the perpetrator in 14 cases. Guns were used in 14 of the 99 cases, 12 of which involved intimate partner homicides. Guns were never used in rapes or robberies. Stab wounds were found in 15 cases. Fifty-six persons died of blunt force injuries. In 39 cases, asphyxia was the cause of the death, with 25 of these in combination with blunt force. In 5 of the robbery cases, a cardiac disease, in addition to blunt force, contributed to the death.

Conclusion: During the 6-year study period, the number of elderly homicide victims, older than 65 years, in Paris and its suburbs has been approximately 16 per year. Males were at highest risk in the 65-74 age group, whereas females accounted for 75% of victims in the >85 age group. The elderly homicide victim was most likely to die from blunt force injuries. Domestic violence accounted for less than 30 % of homicides, whereas robbery was the most frequent motive for homicide, accounting for 40 % of cases. Frailty and social isolation that come with illness or advanced age render the elderly more vulnerable to crime and make it impossible for some elderly individuals to protect themselves.

**Elderly, Homicide, Forensic Sciences**