



E31 The Detection of Risk Factors of Elder Abuse in Domestic Settings

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will understand: (1) some principles of elder abuse, (2) the different practice settings and various forms in which it may present, (3) the current prevalence, and (4) that available data still represents an underestimation of the phenomenon, as the abuse is frequently unreported.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by serving as a key aspect in the detection of risk factors of elder abuse in domestic settings, increase awareness of the existence of this particular form of abuse, and guide the training of health care providers for primary and secondary prevention. Indeed, the results of this study provide a framework for forensic researchers and practitioners on a phenomenon that is still submerged, unlike other forms of domestic abuse.

In Italy, limited research has been conducted on indicators of individuals who may be more susceptible both to perpetrate violence or to be susceptible to abuse. The purpose of this study was to investigate the presence of potential forms of elder abuse in domestic settings by analyzing risk factors related to both the caregiver and the elderly person in order to assess individuals who may be at risk for, or victims of, abuse.¹

Data was collected on a sample of 88 volunteers of an Italian Association named “Auser,” each of whom was in charge of an elderly person assisted by a caregiver in a domestic setting. A previously designed and validated questionnaire (Indicator of Abuse (IOA)–Screen) was used to collect data from participants.² The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions for the caregiver and 24 questions for the elderly person. Multiple logistic regression models were used for data analysis in Stata/SE 10.1 for Microsoft® Windows.

A situation of possible or suspected abuse was detected in 59% of the cases, of which 69% identified the caregiver as a family member. The average age of the caregiver was 55.5±16.3 years, while the average age of the elder was 80.4±8.2 years. The most frequent risk factor for elders to be exposed to higher rates of abuse were dementia, followed by financial dependence. Concerning the caregiver, alcoholism was the most common risk factor. Logistic regression did not show a difference in gender (both in caregivers or elderly people) as statistically significant.

In view of the rapidly aging population, the detection of elder mistreatment is emerging as a public health priority.³ Indeed, as the population ages, the percentage of older adults experiencing abuse, neglect, or exploitation is expected to grow. In such scenarios, interventions to prevent or reduce elder abuse are crucial. This study has found potential risk factors of caregivers and elderly people that may be preventable, to an extent. It is therefore recommended that medicolegal experts become familiar with elder abuse and its potential risk factors.

Reference(s):

1. Maria Gabriella Melchiorre, Bridget Penhale, and Giovanni Lamura. 2014. Understanding Elder Abuse in Italy: Perception and Prevalence, Types and Risk Factors From a Review of the Literature. *Educational Gerontology*, no. 40 (May):909-931. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03601277.2014.912839>.
2. Myrna Reis, and Daphne Nahmiash. 1998. Validation of the Indicators of Abuse (IOA) Screen. *The Gerontologist*, no. 38 (August):471-480.
3. WHO, World Health Organization. *World Report on Ageing and Health*. 2015.

Elder Abuse, Risk Factors, Prevention