



### W9 Interpersonal Violence and Elder Abuse: Maltreatment That Crosses All Borders

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**Learning Overview:** After attending this presentation, attendees will be able to identify multiple forms of abuse and mistreatment, recognize the impact of abuse across the lifespan, and specify key points for the prosecution of abusers.

**Impact on the Forensic Science Community:** This presentation will impact the forensic science community by broadening the education of those working with victims of violence. This presentation will enhance not only the ability to intervene in maltreatment but to prosecute the abuser.

Interpersonal violence and maltreatment are recognized criminal and social problems both in the United States and internationally. Most societies considered child abuse and interpersonal violence, once called “domestic violence”, private family matters. As more research became available, intervention increased, with cases of both child and adult abuse moving into law enforcement and the criminal court system. The actual study of elder abuse is relatively recent in the United States. Mentions of elder mistreatment date back to the mid-1970s, but research and resources were years in coming. Similar to child abuse and domestic violence, harm to an older relative was considered a family matter and stayed behind closed doors. Much of early theory was based on patterns of family violence that had been studied in child abuse and the battered wife syndrome. With the growing understanding of the nature and extent of elder mistreatment came the awareness of the lack of forensic and medical markers that could be useful in the identification of abuse. There was no research that could assist investigators in establishing lacerations, bruising, fractures, or decubiti as elements of abuse or neglect. The aging patient frequently has physiological characteristics or medical conditions, which can mask or mimic markers of neglect and abuse, making it even more difficult to detect or evaluate. Unless an actual crime could be proven, such as homicide, charges were rarely filed against a suspected abuser. Arrest and prosecution for financial abuse or neglect was unheard of. Testimony in both young and older patients could be difficult to obtain.

Multiple aspects of abuse have been examined in the research, including measures for detection, assessment, and documentation, and yet crimes of abuse continue to be difficult to document and prosecute. In this workshop, attendees will learn the challenges of detection and intervention of abuse and the tools that lead to successful prosecution in criminal cases of abuse. The impact of trauma on the victim’s health will be discussed, with specific examples of the impact of strangulation, neglect, and self-neglect. Examples from the literature on child abuse will be used as illustrations. Age-related changes and co-morbidities will be presented, with emphasis on differentiating abuse from other conditions. The intersection of elder abuse and interpersonal violence will be explored. Investigating abuse and neglect in health care facilities is presented, with an intensive case review of elder sexual abuse. The response to the elderly in disasters will be described, with a panel review at the end of both the morning and afternoon sessions.

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#### Interpersonal Violence, Abuse, Maltreatment