E16 **Elder Abuse in Northeastern Italy—Health Care Providers' Perceptions and Medicolegal Perspectives: A Survey of the Phenomenon in Two Italian Hospitals**

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will be aware of the results of a survey performed to study the perception of health care workers about elder abuse and the medicolegal consequences of the low perception of the phenomenon in the daily clinical practice.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by alerting on the importance of reporting abuse to authorities and providing guidelines that can help health care workers: (1) protect the victim, and (2) prevent the abuse from happening again.

Elder abuse is expected to grow in the future with the aging population. The purpose of this study was to analyze health care workers' perceptions, attitudes, knowledge, and experience about elder abuse and neglect in two hospitals in northeastern Italy, as well as their ability to properly report the abuse and eventually identify the needs of workers in order to improve or change the situation. An anonymous 22-question survey was distributed to all health care workers from two different hospitals in northeast Italy who belonged to departments with a high rate of elderly discharge and to those of emergency rooms. Workers were asked about their perception of the environment, signs and risk factors regarding elder abuse, and their own prior experience with the elderly who suffered of abuse. Descriptive and assessing association analyses were carried out. Questionnaires collected were 209, and the response rate was 46%. Health care workers' perceptions about elder abuse is overall low: the contexts recognized (familiar, institutional, and social contexts) and the types of elder abuse (physical, psychological, negligence, economical, pharmacological) were very similar to the literature data, but only 6.7% of the health care workers recognized all the possible signs of abuse.

What stands out is not that all the risk factors of abuse in the elderly were recognized and that even though it is known that women are the most common victims of elder abuse, as regards the female sex, this was indicated in only 14% of the questionnaires. On the other hand, there were no differences in perception within the various professional categories (doctors, nurses, socio-health workers). More than half of health care workers had nearly one case of elder abuse in their working activities; some had more than ten cases in their activities, especially workers from emergency rooms. However, many of them did not know how to treat and protect the victim: only 15.7% reported the abuse to authorities and 24.6% activated a social support. However, more than half (65.7%) of the workers usually asked for advice from a supervisor or a colleague. Even if it is a duty based on Italian law to report abuse to the authorities, the answers given demonstrated that health care workers have difficulties to report; therefore, a creation of guidelines is required in order to help them. Available information and education are also poor. The results showed that the knowledge of health care workers about elder abuse is still superficial and limited, only ahead of clear signs and risk factors. Moreover, there is a lack of confidence in reporting abuse to the authorities. There is also a general lack of knowledge about elder abuse and mismanagement by health care workers, but there is an evident interest if updates are proposed.

Elder Abuse Perception, Elder Abuse Recognition, Health Care Workers

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