

A reflection for world elder abuse awareness day

Abstract

The abuse of older people in terms of abandonment, loneliness and less value, is a reality that can be seen in our society. The Pandemic made us see that even doctors preferred to put all resources at the service of young people, and abandon the elderly. On the other hand, abuse towards the elderly is also reflected in the difficulties that may be encountered when having to carry out management using new technologies or some bureaucratic activity that requires the use of a computer or smartphone. Add to this the unwanted loneliness, contempt and lack of respect of a society that opts for the new and discards the old and used.

Keywords: abuse of older people in terms of abandonment, loneliness and less value, lack of respect in society

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Introduction

I begin this opinion piece by stating the perception that there is a cover-up regarding elder abuse. We are witnessing a boom in projects for the quality of life of older people. We observe that many public institutions have increased their activities in nursing homes and active aging centers, to improve the lives of the elderly. However, there is still a perception about this abuse of the elderly. Perhaps in developed countries, this perception is less accentuated than in underdeveloped countries. But the truth is that the care of the elderly is linked to the economic and social position they occupy.

We observed in times of pandemic that doctors preferred to save young people rather than older people, even if young people had voluntarily exposed themselves to the virus with the risk of infecting people around them (family members).

The word abuse generally means *“To make use of something excessively or improperly, to take advantage of someone.”* In this sense, abuse of the elderly is not only found in the area of health and quality of life. When we require an older person to carry out certain actions or activities, such as carrying out administrative procedures through a complicated digital platform, we are abusing, since technological mastery is generally lower depending on age.

Discussion

In this sense, it can be said that society does not take into account that older people were productive for society, that they contributed their effort and work when they were young and adults. Their contribution was necessary to advance and improve, but when their retirement stage arrives, they are no longer useful to society and

are considered a burden. This is highly unfair as these older people should be recognized, admired and supported, as well as cared for with dignity and respect.

Among the consequences of getting older is cognitive deterioration, suffering from dementia (Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, etc.). Therefore, it is necessary to invest in resources and strategies to combat these diseases, from prevention and to improve quality of life. On the other hand, it is also unfair that research to improve people’s lives is a function of economic resources. Richer countries have more and better opportunities. On the other hand, the poorest countries have elderly people in truly worrying conditions.

The data provided by the World Health Organization,¹ regarding elder abuse is:

In the past year, approximately one in six people over the age of 60 experienced some form of abuse in community settings.

Rates of this type of abuse in institutions, such as nursing homes and chronic care centers, are high: two out of three workers in these centers report having inflicted some type of abuse in the last year.

Rates of elder abuse have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

These events can lead to serious physical injuries and long-term psychological consequences.

This problem is expected to increase in many countries due to rapidly aging populations.

The global population of those over 60 will more than double, from 900 million in 2015 to around 2 billion in 2050.

Table 1 Systematic reviews and meta-analyses (WHO, 2022)

Type of abuse	Reported by seniors	Notified by older persons and their representatives	Reported by workers
Overall prevalence	15.70%	There is not enough data	64.2%, or two out of every three workers
Psychological abuse	11.60%	33.40%	32.50%
Physical abuse	2.60%	14.10%	9.30%
Economic abuse	6.80%	13.80%	There is not enough data
Inattention	4.20%	11.60%	12.00%
Sexual abuse	0.90%	1.90%	0.70%

Among the abuses suffered by older people, according to National Institute on Aging (NIA, nd.),² the following are detected:

Physical abuse occurs when someone causes bodily harm to the elderly person by hitting, pushing or slapping them. It can also occur when she is restrained against her will, such as being locked in a room or tied to a piece of furniture.

Emotional abuse, sometimes called psychological abuse, can occur when a caregiver repeatedly says hurtful or humiliating words, yells at, threatens, or ignores an older person. Another form of emotional abuse is when that person is prevented from seeing family and close friends.

Neglect occurs when the person caring for someone older does not respond to their needs, whether physical, emotional or social. Or, if you do not give him his food, medicine or prevent his access to medical care. Abandonment occurs when an older person in need of care is left alone without making arrangements for someone to attend to their needs.

Sexual abuse occurs when an older person's caregiver forces them to witness or be a part of sexual acts. Financial abuse occurs when someone steals an older person's money or belongings. This may include forging checks, collecting pension or Social Security benefits, or using another person's credit cards or bank accounts without their

permission. This also includes changing a name on a will, a bank account, a life insurance policy, or the title of a home without proper permission.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is considered that public institutions should provide more human and economic resources. On the other hand, education is essential in all areas and educational levels to teach people to value the importance of growing up and getting older. THE value of older people and their contribution to society.

Acknowledgments

None

Conflicts of interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

References

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2. Mistreatment and abuse of the elderly. *National Institute of Aging*.