Chapter 34
Management of Elder Abuse Through Social Support

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is an attempt to highlight the numerous ways in which elders are abused in our society and the ways to support them. A concise account in ways elders are vulnerable and how they are exploited are discussed in the chapter as well as remedies to these problems. The chapter includes types of abuse faced by elders and the consequences they face due to it. It also discusses Social Support as the main remedy, social support as an acronym of 13 types of social support. The chapter concludes by recommendation of how elder abuse can be stopped or at least controlled.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of elder abuse has driven through the world. Millions of older people were impacted by the elder abuse. In India elder abuse has caused suffering to many. The impact of elder abuse on older people is shocking. This disorder shakes up our faith on younger generation, family, and society. We wonder about the existence of God or another higher force and its justice why would it want millions of older people to suffer from this social disorder? Here is an attempt to manage the problem of elder abuse. Further, it is important to recognise what happens to the people of elder abuse at the physical and mental level, and how they respond to it. Elder abuse has a deep impact on the inner as well as outer state of older people. Elder abuse people can connect with their inner source of strength and wisdom to make life more meaningful.

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ELDER ABUSE

Elder abuse (also called “elder mistreatment,” “senior abuse,” “abuse in later life,” “abuse of older adults,” “abuse of older women,” and “abuse of older men”) is “a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.” (Action on Elder Abuse, n.d.). This definition has been adopted by the World Health Organization from a definition put forward by Action on Elder Abuse in the UK. The UK’s Action on Elder Abuse, a voluntary organization, developed a definition, following consultation with its membership, which the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) has subsequently adapted. The agreed version is ‘Elder abuse is a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person’ (Action on Elder Abuse, 1995; INPEA, 1997). The above definition explains the frequency of abuse (single or repeated act); that abuse (or neglect) might consist of a lack of necessary action (omission as well as commission); that there is some relationship between the parties consisting of at least an expectation of trust; and that the action causes some harm or distress to the elder.

The abuse of elders by caregivers is a worldwide issue. In 2002, the work of the World Health Organization brought international attention to the issue of elder abuse (Cook-Daniels, 2003). In 2006 the International Network for Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) designated June 15 as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) and an increasing number of events are held across the globe on this day to raise awareness of elder abuse, and highlight ways to challenge such abuse (International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, accessed June 26, 2007). Elder abuse is a violation of Human Rights and a significant cause of injury, illness, loss of productivity, isolation and despair. (WHO/INPEA, 2002a). In the Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology, Gottlieb (2009) defines social support as the social-psychological and interpersonal processes that maintain and promote health and well-being.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe what is elder abuse; types of abuse; health consequences and risk factors associated with elder abuse; and the role of social support in the management of elder abuse.

TYPES OF ABUSE

There are several types of abuse of older people that are generally recognized as being elder abuse, including: (Robinson, 2012; what is Elder Abuse, 2012).

- **Physical:** e.g. hitting, punching, slapping, burning, pushing, kicking, restraining, false imprisonment / confinement, or giving excessive or improper medication as well as withholding treatment and medication.
- **Psychological/Emotional:** e.g. humiliating a person. A common theme is a perpetrator who identifies something that matters to an older person and then uses it to coerce an older person into a particular action. It may take verbal forms such as yelling, name-calling, ridiculing, constantly criticizing, accusations, blaming, or non-verbal forms such as ignoring, silence, shunning or withdrawing affection.
- **Financial Abuse:** Also known as financial exploitation. e.g. illegal or unauthorized use of a person’s property, money, pension book or other valuables (including changing the person’s will to name the abuser as heir). It may be obtained by deception, coercion, misrepresentation, undue in-