

Education Update

Trinitas Regional Medical Center
Education Department

April 2011

Elder Abuse

- Elder abuse is any deliberate physical, sexual or psychological attack on a vulnerable adult, unreasonable confinement, or the deliberate withholding of services that are necessary to maintain a person's physical and mental health.
- Elder abuse can be:
 - physical or sexual (unexplained or unusual injuries, cuts, burns or bruises; isolation, threats)
 - psychological (isolation, threats, refusal on the part of caregivers to allow travel, visits by other family/friends, or attendance at church)
 - Exploitation/financial (misuse of the elderly adults' income or financial resources, overdue rent and utility bills, missing checks)
 - medical (withholding or improper administration of medications or medical treatments)
 - self-neglect (malnutrition, lack of heat, electricity or water, unclean living arrangement).
- It is important not to view the signs and symptoms listed above as single indicators of abuse or neglect. A total assessment must be made of the patient, using the above indicators as guidelines.

If you have any questions or concerns about a particular patient, please talk to your immediate supervisor or contact the Social Work Department.

The Typical Victim

Individuals who are at high risk:

- Live with a family member
- Age 75 or older
- Women (more women than men are abused)
- Dependent (the victim relies on the abuser for basic needs)
- Elders with mental or physical impairment

Reasons for Elder Abuse

- Resentment
- Longer life spans
- Life crises
- Lack of financial resources
- Caretaker impairment

How Can You Help?

- Be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect.
- Document accurately.
 - Size, pattern, age, description and location of all injuries.
 - Emotional status, as well as physical appearance.
 - Non-bodily evidence of abuse, for example, torn clothing.
 - Patient/caregiver interaction.
 - Any inconsistencies noted in the statement of the origin of the injuries which are suggestive of abuse.
- Know your reporting responsibilities. Be aware of the various agencies that can provide support for the victims.