

Human development, developmental tasks and mistreatment toward older adults: Where is the crack?

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Lyrics of “Anthem” by Leonard Cohen

- “
- Ring the bells that still can ring
- Forget your perfect offering
- **There is a crack in everything**
- **That's how the light gets in**

- We asked for signs
- the signs were sent:
- **the birth betrayed**
- **the marriage spent**
- **Yeah the widowhood**
- of every government --
- signs for all to see
-”

What is older adults' abuse and neglect?

- “(a) intentional actions that cause harm or create a serious risk of harm (whether or not harm is intended), to a vulnerable elder by a caregiver or other person who stands in a trust relationship to the elder, or
- (b) failure by a caregiver to satisfy the elder’s basic needs or to protect the elder from harm”.
- “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(2002, WHO Toronto Declaration on Elder Abuse)

Introduction: the several possible focus

- The field of older adults abuse and neglect has been recognized as an important field of scientific inquiry
 - “Journal of elder abuse and neglect”, Regular Scientific meetings on violence through life span, in several parts of the world (IVAT); Public Funds allocated to do research research as Daphne program in EU and OVC in USA

Elder mistreatment: a public health problem

- The field of older adults' abuse and neglect has been recognized as a public health problem and a "speciality worthy of interest by clinicians, epidemiologists, and health service researchers" (Lachs & Pillemer, 2004).
 - since it is spread across several countries, regions, different social classes
 - It has been linked to mortality and co-morbidity at physical and mental level
 - There are significant numbers of prevalence and severity levels

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Elder mistreatment: A multidisciplinary field

- The field of older adults' abuse and neglect has been recognized as a multidisciplinary one (Anetzberger, 2004)
 - There are judicial views and practices about it that make clear that abuse toward older adults is a public crime, a law-breaking that has consequences. And there are a lot of know-how from the forensic medicine field to make proofs of abuse
 - There are clinical-health views that take abuse as a matter of clinical management (Anetzberger, 2004)
 - There are social views that take abuse as a matter that claims social and judicial protection (there are now a Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People with connections to ONU)

Traning professionals for screening and assessing abuse

- There are several voices withing the geriatric field that value a lot the idea that screen for abuse should be made at the primary care level settings.
 - These settings have heavy schedules that are not compatible with careful review or assess of developmental paths
- Anyway there is the need to train professionals to do that screening and make consequent full assessment.

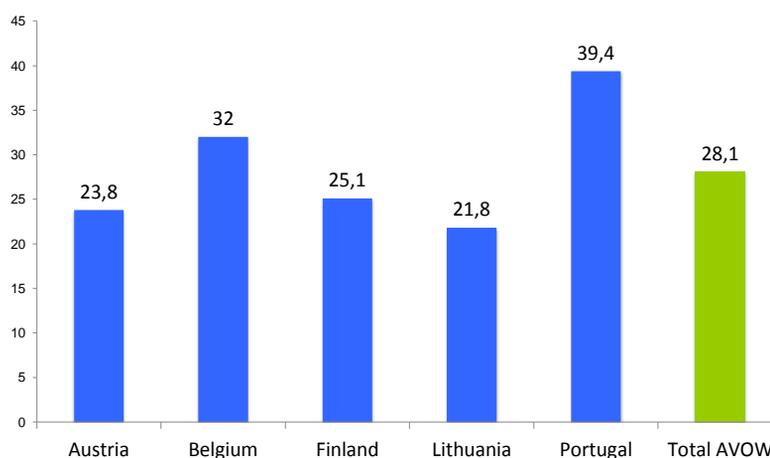
Identify risk factors or ...searching for footprints...

- Actually professionals have some tools for screening abuse
 - IOA, QEEA, EASI, CASE, AMA tool, and many others
 - These tools identify risk factors whose presence indicates the possibility of abuse is occurring
 - This process of screening is obviously useful but misses explanation.
 - Granny Battering (Baker, 1975)

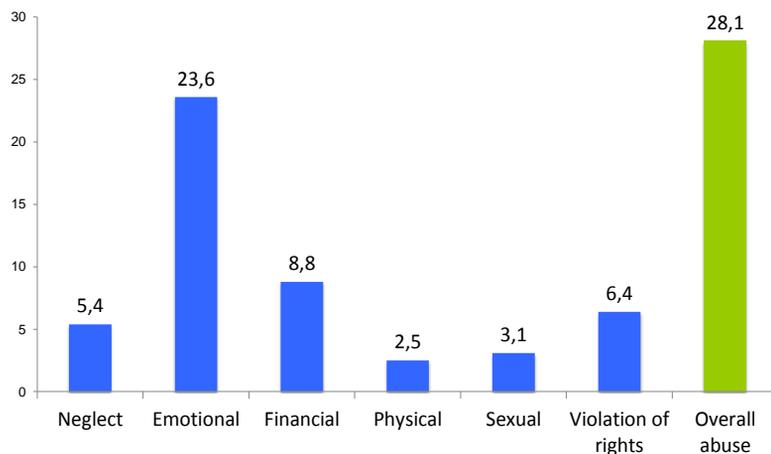
Data that suggest abuse may be approached within a developmental framework

- The majority of abuse occurs within family and family system is probably the context where the problems of individual development makes more damage.
- The perpetrators are spouses and children
- The Specialists suggest to look to the cultural background of behavior before claim that behavior is abusive.

Results: Prevalence of Elder Abuse (%) Avow Study, 2011



Results: Types of Abuse (%) (Avow Study, 2011)



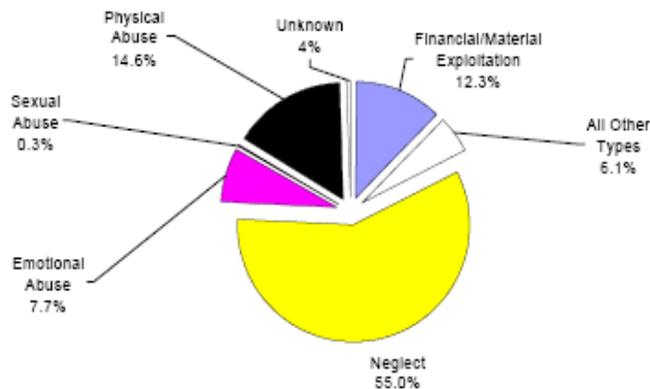
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Who were the perpetrators? (Avow study, 2011; Portugal data)

Perpetrator	Neglect	Emotional abuse	Financial abuse	Physical abuse	Sexual abuse	Violation of rights
Partner or spouse	3.8	20.1	7.3	1.6	3.4	9.1
Daughter	5.7	6.6	2.6	1.1	0.3	2.0
Son	3.0	5.5	2.9	0.6	0.2	1.3
Daughter in law	1.3	2.9	0.6	0.5	0.2	0.7
Son in law	1.7	1.6	0.6	0.3	0	0.5
Parents, stepfather or stepmother	0	0.6	0.2	0.2	0	0.2
Grandchildren	1.1	1.6	1.1	0.3	0.2	0.2
Some other relative (siblings, nephew, niece, cousin, etc)	2.5	4.7	3.1	0.6	0.3	0.7
Someone else I closely know (ex-spouse, a friend, some acquaintance...)	1.1	2.8	1.3	0.2	0.3	0.8
neighbor	1.1	3.6	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.5
Home help, paid caregiver	2.2	0.6	0.8	0.2	0	0
other	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.3	0	0.2

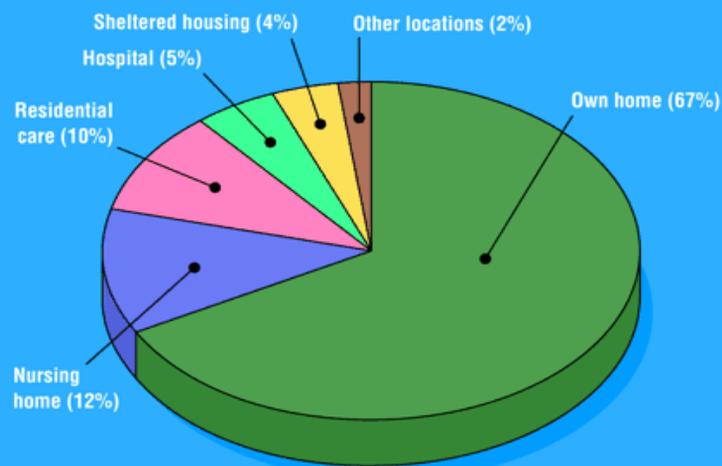
(NCEA, 1996)

Types of Domestic Elder Abuse (1996)



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Settings of abuse of elderly people*



* Based on approximately 10 000 calls reporting abuse to Action on Elder Abuse between 1997 and September 2003

Source: *Elder Abuse*

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Screening abuse through developmental indicators or searching the theory or explanation

- In cases where it is evident that there is a victim and a perpetrator or even in cases where each one is both a victim and a perpetrator we should ask:
 - Have the victim fulfill her/his developmental tasks?
 - Have the perpetrator fulfill at a satisfactory level her/his developmental tasks?
 - Have the victim achieve intimacy and generativity at acceptable levels?
 - Have the perpetrator achieve intimacy and generativity at acceptable levels?

Features and suppositions of a developmental view of mistreatment of older adults

- Both victims and perpetrators are physically close but have no “proximal zones of development” (they are close **and** have no intimacy)
- The interdependency necessary to balance the family system is disrupted
- Victimization and aggression can be learned as the way to keep the system at the expense of its own change and development
- Victimization can also be viewed as a difficulty to assert or establish boundaries of what the other understands as acceptable

Features and suppositions of a developmental view of mistreatment of older adults

- As change and development occurs many times with crises, perhaps some some level or some kind of abuse within the family is normative

Conclusion

- This presentation was a theoretical exploration about the possibilities of looking to abuse within a developmental framework.
- They should be tested and grounded
- If someone wants to explore more deep this hypothesys and test them we are ready to make connections

Thanks a lot!