THE WORLDWIDE FACE OF ELDER ABUSE

July 2011

Background:

The WorldView Environmental Scan on Elder Abuse was the first large-scale global survey of elder abuse and obtained more information from more respondents representing more countries than any previous study. It built on early work that resulted in the document *Missing Voices*. Respondents came from developed and developing countries and all regions of the world, yet another research first. Finally, unlike earlier investigations, the Scan did not narrow its focus on a single elder abuse form, professional context, or respondent type. As a result, the Scan is the broadest inquiry into elder abuse as a problem of international interest and scope to date.

The aims of the study were two-fold**:** (1) to understand the nature and response to elder abuse in individual countries worldwide, and (2) to serve as a pilot project leading to more in-depth investigation and expanded collaboration with countries globally on the problem.

The study questionnaire was reviewed by nearly two dozen experts on elder abuse from universities around the world prior to its being sent to countries in all six World Health Organization (WHO) regions. Available in English, Spanish, French, and Japanese, the survey sections included questions pertaining to public and professional knowledge of elder abuse as well as legislation and policy, available services and programs, educational and training resources, and research on elder abuse. Survey dissemination was facilitated by the International Network on the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) regional and national representatives. Other associations, such as the Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, International Association of Gerontology, and HelpAge International, also encouraged survey response. Analysis followed standard techniques for both quantitative and qualitative data.

A total of 53 countries from the six WHO regions responded to the study, for a total of 190 surveys representing 362 respondents.

Highlights from the Findings:

- Elder abuse was recognized as a problem that exists in all responding countries.
- No single definition of elder abuse applied globally, but definitions cited by respondents tended toward those used by INPEA and the National Research Council.
- The theme of respect and honor emerged as a value applied to older adults, and the issue of ageism was identified as a problem.
- Poverty and lack of social support were considered leading causes of elder abuse in developing countries, while living alone and lack of social support were seen as elder abuse contributors in developed countries.

- An overall lack of awareness and education on the problem of elder abuse was cited.
- Most professionals and the general public seemed to lack an understanding or awareness of laws that protect older adults.
- Consistent laws and policies on elder abuse were seen as absent at all levels of government.
- There was little specialized training and research on elder abuse outside of a few select countries, such as the United States and Canada.
- Different agencies were responsible for addressing elder abuse, most typically nongovernmental organizations in developing countries and social services and the police in developed countries.
- Unlike the respondents from developed countries, the majority of those from developing countries felt that available services did not do a good job of combating elder abuse.
- Little programming was cited for elder abuse prevention worldwide.
- Respondents identified the need for internet access for knowledge exchange.
- There was a call for research, particularly in rural areas and in institutions in which older adults live.

Reference: Podneiks, E., Anetzberger, G.J., Wilson, S.J., Teaster, P.B., & Wangmo, T. (2010). WorldView Environmental Scan on Elder Abuse. *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect*, *22*, 161-179.

Justification:

Following the initial Worldview Environmental Scan, it is now time to conduct a second international study, *The Worldwide Face of Elder Abuse.*

Purpose:

The purpose of this new inquiry is to build on the original Worldview Environmental Scan (Podnieks, Anetzberger, Wilson, Teaster, & Wangmo, 2010). In so doing, we seek to further our knowledge of elder abuse and understand how and why people mistreat elders on a global scale.

Specific Aims:

1. Increase the number of survey respondents, both in terms of represented persons and countries,
2. Expand the group of experts and expertise in the field of elder abuse through the formation or use of related national multidisciplinary teams, and
3. Explore undisclosed areas of inquiry with respect to elder abuse as a global problem.

Objectives:

In order to accomplish our specific aims, we propose to do the following:

1. Increase the number of survey participants by identifying and facilitating a national multidisciplinary team (NMDT) in each country;
2. Examine the circumstances in which abuse occurs in different nations and how cultural, economic, and social contexts influence elder abuse;
3. Explore the consequences of elder abuse on the elder victims and their collaterals;
4. Obtain information on perpetrators of elder abuse (not addressed at all in the Worldview I).

METHODOLOGY

Methodological Decisions:

1. Use a case study approach. Rationale:
    a. Scant information can be provided by most countries.
    b. The methodology spurs respondents to produce and think about stories that capture elder abuse as it occurs in a specific locale.
2. Use a grounded theory approach[1]
3. This study is impactful in a public policy sense:
    a. The United Nations is focusing on the Convention of Rights of Older Person.
    b. WHO conducted a report on world family violence in 2002.

Question under consideration:

Should quantitative information be included? If so, what should be included?

Case Study Instructions:

Describe three unique and real situations (those that actually occurred) that seem typical of elder abuse in your country. In describing each situation, start wherever you like, but minimally try to address the following. Please try to limit each case study to 250-300 words.

1. Demographics of the victim (i.e., age, sex, race, country) and demographics of the perpetrator (i.e., age, sex, race, country).
2. Relationship of victim to perpetrator (e.g., spouse, child, grandchild, other relative)
3. Living situation (i.e., household composition, rural or urban area)

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[1] Matthew Miles and A. Michael Huberman. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2nd Edition); Corbin, Juliet and Anselm Strauss (Nov 19, 2007). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*

4. Type of abuse (e.g., physical, sexual, emotional, financial, abandonment, servitude, begging)
5. Why the abuse occurred, including any likely risk factors
6. What happened as a result (including interventions and consequences of the abuse on the victims and collaterals)
7. Participants are welcome to send us pictures or drawings to accompany the case studies, but the indentifiers should be removed in order to protect confidentiality.

Note:
- Participants should take care to de-identify individuals in the case studies in order to protect confidentiality but preserve authenticity.

Timeline:

Year I 2011:

1. Refine and finalize the research methodology (including the participants' experience with elder abuse)
2. Identify consultants for the project.
3. Approach WHO when the pilot study methods are finalized. Approach the UN Committee on Aging at the same time.
4. Identify potential respondents. Respondents will be asked to create or identify a national multidisciplinary team (NMDT). This team would be, at a minimum, composed of individuals representing three different professional disciplines. We stress that having three disciplines is not exclusive to the NMDT composition and encourage teams to be formed holistically and broadly. Other criteria for inclusion on the team include members who are knowledgeable about elder abuse as a problem as well as existing responses to it.
5. Teaster submits the study to the University of Kentucky IRB

Year II 2012:

1. Conduct pilot testing with five respondents who come from five of the six regions identified by the WHO (i.e., Africa, The Americas, Southeast Asia, Europe, Eastern Mediterranean, Western Pacific)
2. Analyze the results and determine final methods for the study
3. Seek methodological guidance from a nationally recognized qualitative researcher at the University of Kentucky
4. Gather information from each country
5. Conduct analysis

Year III:

1. Conduct and conclude analysis
2. Write articles, submit abstracts, prepare papers and presentations.

Roles on the Project:

1. Three Universities in Collaboration:

    a. Ryerson University (Elizabeth Podnieks, Ph.D.)
    b. Cleveland State University (Georgia Anetzberger, Ph.D.)
    c. University of Kentucky (Pamela Teaster, Ph.D.)

2. International Federation on Aging:

    a. Help secure the sample and conduct the study

        i. Post on website (instrument of ongoing communication)
        ii. Linkages to participants (IFA Directors to assist),
        iii. Publish information on project in e-news letter and solicit participants through this mechanism,
        iv. Use IFA database
        v. Contact (WHO) John Beard for review, comment, and potential collaboration on the study proposal
        vi. Need listing of people and countries to a map of action for us to identify any gaps in countries to find contacts other than those with IFA

    b. Help disseminate the findings

3. Proposed Pilot Sites: CNPEA, NCPEA, Tenzin Wangmo (Switzerland), Dong He Hong (Korea), Portugal

We are actively seeking funding for conducting this project.
We wish to launch the study with the pilot sites commencing in January 2012.