

Preventing abuse, from an older person's perspective

Dr Audrey Guy

B.Sc, Dip.Soc.Stud, M.Ed, M.Acc, M.P.S.

Visiting Fellow, University of Canberra, Australia

Elder abuse takes many forms

- It can be against a person
- It can be against a group of people locally
- It can be against a group of people at a national level
- It can be against a group of people internationally

Types of personal abuse

- It can be physical abuse
- It can be mental abuse
- It can be sexual abuse
- It can be financial abuse
- It can be abuse through neglect
- It can be spiritual abuse
- It can be cultural abuse
- It can be medical abuse

Where abuse occurs

- At home
- In residential care and nursing homes
- In the local community
- In a town or in a city
- In individual shops
- In shopping malls
- In conferences on ageing

Who are the abused?

The elderly mainly although it extends to other members of the population

Why are we abused?

We are perceived to be too weak mentally and/or physically to fight back. People take advantage of us

What can we do?

- Raise public awareness of abuse in the community
- Educate the public about what abuse is and how it operates
- Encourage older people to make full use of the later stage of life so that we are treated with respect and less likely to be abused
- We older people should have the opportunity to identify our needs so that they can be met and respected

Older people should be recognised as a valued part of the community

- We don't abuse what we value
- Older people have a lot to offer their communities and countries
- Those who deal with the elderly, at whatever level, should be taught to respect us
- The needs of older people should be recognised and catered for

The way ahead: recognising abuse

- We need a campaign to raise awareness of abuse
- We need to identify what abuse is to alert both abusers and the abused
- We need to educate abusers on the effect of abuse on others
- We need to alert abusers to the criminal nature of abuse and the penalties attached to it
- We need to empower those who are likely to be abused

Addressing abuse

- We need to make people aware of where abuse occurs, at home, in residential care or out in the community
- Penalties should be such that abuse stops
- Abuse isn't only the province of individuals. It can be in communities and at national level. It should be addressed in all its forms
- Ageism should be recognised as national abuse. Older people have the right to equality

The role of governments

- Public policy can be a form of abuse
- It should be government policy to provide adequately for the weakest citizens including the elderly
- All citizens should have access to adequate food, shelter, clothing and medical care
- If governments, including through provision of adequate pensions, don't provide for these then that is a form of abuse

At the world level

- We need to recognise the universal needs of older people in a way which is easily understood by all and allows older people to live in safety, with our basic needs met.
- We need to move towards creating nations where elder abuse does not exist.
- If we respect our elders it is likely that we will respect the needs of other citizens
- This would create great nations
- It should be an international goal