ADULT ABUSE and SELF NEGLECT
WHAT ARE THEY & WHAT IS BEING DONE ABOUT THEM?

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Today’s Remarks

- What is NAPSA and what is APS
- Overview of elder abuse in general
- Self-neglect in particular:
  - Indicators
  - Risk factors
  - Interventions
  - Role of APS
- Federal role in elder & adult abuse
- Summary and discussion points
NAPSA  www.apsnetwork.org

- The only national organization representing adult protective services and clients.
- 700+ members from every state
- An annual conference – in New York in 2010 – a newsletter, various committees, etc.
- The national voice of vulnerable adults, advocating for the services they need, and providing professional training and information to the APS field.
- Funded by the Admin. on Aging and others
What is Adult Protective Services?

Purpose:
- To investigate reports of abuse, neglect, self-neglect and exploitation of adults with disabilities age 18+ (42 states at minimum).
- To intervene to protect the victim to extent possible.

Authorization:
- APS is the statutorily authorized entity under each state’s laws to receive and investigation reports of elder abuse.
Adult Protective Services (APS)

- APS professionals are the first responders to elder abuse and abuse of younger adults with disabilities – APS investigates, intervenes, protects.
- APS workers may be the only people who see victims in their homes (except for predators).
- APS = the “boots on the ground” in the fight against elder and vulnerable adult abuse.
- APS work is difficult & dangerous.
- APS saves the lives and assets of vulnerable adults.
APS ≠ APS

- APS can differ from state to state & county to county:
  - Definitions
  - Client eligibility: age; disability; residence
  - Mandated reporting – 11 states require financial institutions to report abuse to APS
  - Resources

- APS budgets are being slashed in virtually every state while the client population soars
Elder Abuse: Just the Facts

- New research findings from New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study (Dr. Lachs et al)
  - Statewide random telephone surveys of community dwelling older persons compared to cases reported anywhere (APS, police, aging service, DV).
  - One in 13 persons 60+ reported abuse within the previous 12 months (7.6%).
  - Sample excluded persons in facilities, with dementia, without telephones, etc.
Elder Abuse Underreported

NYS Prevalence Study (abuse by others):

- For every elder abuse case reported to any agency, **23.5** cases go unreported.
- For every case of financial exploitation reported, **44** go unreported.
- Only **one in 57** neglect cases is ever reported.
- Seniors reported financial abuse occurs more frequently than any other type of elder abuse.
- Most elder abuse (90%) is committed by family members.
Abused seniors are:

- 3× more likely to die (Lachs).
- 4× more likely to go into a nursing home (Lachs).
- More likely to utilize medical services at higher rates (DV studies).
- At risk of needing Medicaid as a direct result of financial exploitation (9%) (Utah study).
- Elder abuse = huge drain on Medicare, Medicaid & other public programs
Self Neglect - Type of Adult Abuse

- NAPSA’s policy is that self neglect is a form of vulnerable adult abuse.
- A significant portion of APS work is devoted to self-neglect.
- Not every state includes self neglect in APS but most do.
- Self neglectors are very expensive: calls to police, public health, zone enforcement, animal control and repeated medical interventions.
Self Neglect Defined by NAPSA

- An adult's inability, due to physical or mental impairment or diminished capacity, to perform essential self-care tasks including:
  - (a) obtaining essential food, clothing, shelter, and medical care;
  - (b) obtaining goods and services necessary to maintain physical health, mental health, or general safety; and/or
  - (c) managing one's own financial affairs.
- Choice of lifestyle or living arrangement is not, in itself, evidence of self-neglect.
Self Neglect – Signs of

- Dehydration
- Malnutrition
- Hypothermia/hyperthermia
- Excessive dirt or odor, hazardous, unsafe or unclean living conditions
- Inadequate or inappropriate clothing
Self Neglect – More signs of

- Missing eyeglasses, hearing aids, dentures or prostheses
- Unexpected/unexplained deterioration of health
- Bedsores
- Signs of excessive drugging, refusal to take medication or other drug misuse.

From WCADV on Health Canada website.
Self Neglect – Risks of

- Self-neglectors are 2X as likely to die as non-self-neglectors
- Self neglect is an independent risk factor for death
- *Self neglect*, the most common reported form of elder abuse, occurs 3X as often as caregiver neglect or physical abuse.

Dr. Carmel Dyer, Consortium for Research in Elder Self-Neglect (CREST)
[http://www.bcm.edu/crest/?PMID=3705](http://www.bcm.edu/crest/?PMID=3705)
Self Neglectors: Characteristics of

- Generally or often:
  - Isolated
  - Untrusting
  - Fearful
  - Independent
  - Do not see any problems with situation
  - Do not want any help
  - May have a history of trauma
Self Neglectors: What do we know?

- They are more likely to:
  - Live alone
  - Be female
  - Be older
  - Have a substance abuse problem

From the Health Canada website
Self Neglectors Are Likely to be Ill

- Physically, they have higher rates of:
  - Heart disease
  - Depression (51%)
  - 2/3’s have physical impairments which hamper their abilities to perform ADLs.
  - Poor nutrition plays a role

Carmel Dyer, MD, American Journal of Public Health
Self Neglectors Are Likely to be Ill

- Mentally, they are more likely to have:
  - Dementia
  - Mental Illness
  - Half score poorly on cognitive tests
- Many fail to recognize the danger they’re in

Health Canada website and Dr. Carmel Dyer
Self Neglect Occurs in Isolation

95% lack adequate social supports – the most common finding

Dr. Carmel Dyer
Hoardin: a special case

- The acquisition of and the inability to discard worthless items although they appear to others to have no value*
- May see self as creative or thrifty, also as an environmentalist and/or collector
- If animal hoarder, sees self as savior
- *Cannot* make the decision to dispose of items
- May feel out of control, embarrassed, overwhelmed

*Frost and Gross, 1993; also Kim Hubbard and Carol Tryon, Orange Co., CA
Why do some people self neglect?

- OCD in some cases of hoarding
- Dementia leading to loss of executive function → can’t make decisions
- Inability to ask for or accept help
- Fierce desire to maintain independence
- Paranoia or delusions
- Traumatic events leading to withdrawal as form of self protection
- Functional impairments
What’s to be done?

- Adult Protective Services (APS) responds in most states
- Self neglect the most common type of abuse reported to APS (27%)*
- In some states self-neglect makes up most of the APS cases
- Self neglect cases are very time intensive
- Self neglect often draws the attention of the community and the press

*2004 APS Data Survey; National Center on Elder Abuse
What can APS do re self neglect?

- In some states, APS can take immediate, temporary, emergency custody of a self neglector in serious jeopardy.

- Only persons declared by a court to lack decisional capacity, based on medical evidence, can have their lives taken over by others once they are adults.

- Emphasis on self-determination can prevent interventions.
What are the conflicts?

- **Autonomy:**
  - *I’m and American, darn it.* I can do what I please with my life and my property and the government should butt out.
  - Professionals have an ethical duty to respect autonomous decisions of competent adults.

- **Beneficence:**
  - Professionals must try to act in the best interest of their clients.
  - If client lacks capacity, professional assumes they want needed help.
Intervening in self neglect cases

- If client refuses help and interventions are judged necessary:
  - **WHO DECIDES?**
  - And **HOW DO THEY DECIDE?**
SUCCESS IS POSSIBLE

- Perhaps not in all cases
- Give the client a sense of control
- Provide social supports in a gradual manner
- Never shame or belittle the client
- Provide needed medical interventions
- Support more research
Hoarding Task Forces

- Multi-disciplinary:
  - APS
  - Animal control
  - Public health
  - Zoning authorities & fire departments
  - Health care providers
  - Social service/aging service providers
  - Mental health professionals
  - Public guardian agencies
Most important principles

- Respect client’s rights
- Gain and build the client’s trust
- Accept small victories
- Work collaboratively
Policy Issues

- State laws, policies and services differ
- Time and resources APS has to devote to self-neglect cases at risk
- Emphasis on arrest and prosecution – i.e. vulnerable adult abuse = domestic violence – de-legitimizes the suffering and victimization of self-neglectors
- Ongoing, fundamental conflicts of autonomy and self-determination vs. protection and safety
Intervening in self neglect cases

What do you think?

- Where should the lines be drawn?
- How should the process work?
- When does the community’s desires outweigh those of the individual?
- What assessment tools should be used? Have they been tested?
- What agencies and professionals should be involved?
Finally

- What are the rights of the individual to live in a self-destructive manner vs. the rights and obligations of the community in which he or she lives?

- Please let me know when you have it all figured out!
What’s the government doing?
FEDERAL DOLLARS SPENT ON ABUSE AND NEGLECT

- 7% ($520 Million) for Child Abuse
- 2% ($153.5 Million) for Domestic Abuse
- 91% ($6.7 Billion) for Elder Abuse

Source: Congressional Research Service
The Federal Government’s Response to Elder Abuse Is:

- **$11.9 Million** in designated funding in 2009 (<$.21/person 60 and older).

- **$0 dollars** in designated funding for Adult Protective Services

- Some states use SSBG $’s - House Republican budget eliminates SSBG as duplicative funding.

- Vulnerable adult abuse victims the only victims which get no direct federal help.
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91% ($6.7 Billion)

Source: Congressional Research Service
Estimated Numbers of US Crime/Abuse Victims by Age/Type

Number of Victims

- Domestic Violence
- Child Abuse
- Elder Abuse

*EA Victims based on 2009 Acierno study
Elder Justice Act Now Law

- EJA authorizes first federal funding stream for state and local APS Programs at $100M/year
- Authorizes $25M for APS demonstration grants
- President Obama included $15M in new money for APS demo grants in FY 2012 budget request (+$1.5M for Indian APS & $5M for Long-term Care Ombudsman Prog.)
In Summary, Elder Abuse Is:

- A huge public health, social justice and criminal justice issue.
- More rampant and more lethal than previously known.
- An large but invisible cost to Medicaid et al.
- Affects the fastest growing population group.
- According to surveys, reported cases are increasingly complex.
- Not a priority for the federal government.
Thank You!!

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