





European report on preventing elder maltreatment

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Abstract

Elder maltreatment is pervasive in all countries in the WHO European Region, and estimates suggest that at least 4 million people in the Region experience elder maltreatment in any one year. Most countries in the Region have an ageing population, and one third of the population is forecast to be 60 years and older in 2050, putting more people at risk of elder maltreatment. Elder maltreatment has far-reaching consequences for the mental and physical well-being of tens of millions of older people, and if left unchecked will result in their premature death. Estimates suggest that about 2500 older people may lose their lives annually from elder maltreatment. The report highlights the numerous biological, social, cultural, economic and environmental factors that interact to influence the risk and protective factors of being a victim or perpetrator of elder maltreatment. There is some evidence of effectiveness, and examples include psychological programmes for perpetrators and programmes designed to change attitudes towards older people, improve the mental health of caregivers and, in earlier life, to promote nurturing relationships and social skills learning. The evidence base needs to be strengthened, but much can be done by implementing interventions using an evaluative framework. Prevention and social justice for older people can only be achieved by mainstreaming this response into health and social policy. Surveys show that the public and policy-makers are increasingly concerned about the problem, and the policy response needs to be strengthened to meet this demand.

Keywords

ELDER ABUSE - prevention and control AGGRESSION
INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS
AGED

EUROPE

ISBN 978 92 890 0237 0

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Publications

WHO Regional Office for Europe

Scherfigsvej 8

DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø, Denmark

Alternatively, complete an online request form for documentation, health information, or for permission to quote or translate, on the Regional Office web site (http://www.euro.who.int/pubrequest).

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Text editing: David Breuer Design: Møller & Kompagni

Printed in Rome, Italy by Servizi Tipografici Carlo Colombo

FRONT COVER PHOTO CREDIT Istockphoto

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Istockphoto: pp. 2, 3, 4, 25, 29, 31, 32, 33, 36, 37, 43, 46, 47, 50, 52,

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Acronyms

ABUEL Abuse and health among elderly in Europe

CIS Commonwealth of Independent States

DALYs Disability-adjusted life-years

EU European Union

HALE Healthy life expectancy

Acknowledgements

Many international experts and WHO staff members have contributed to developing this publication, and we are very thankful for their support and guidance. The conceptual foundations for this publication were outlined at a meeting held in London during the SAFETY 2010 Conference. Consultation participants included Alexander Butchart, Nancy M. Gage-Lindner, Christiane Hauzeur, Dimitrinka Jordanova-Pesevska, Freja Ulvestad Kärki, Fanka Koycheva, Francesco Mitis, Bridget Penhale, Marija Raleva, Dinesh Sethi, Marie Svendsen and Fimka Tozija. Ideas were further developed at an editorial meeting held in Rome on 14–15 February 2011 when the following were present: Thomas Goergen, Dimitrinka Jordanova-Pesevska, Freja Ulvestad Kärki, Ariela Lowenstein, Gillian Manthorpe, Christopher Mikton, Francesco Mitis, Bridget Penhale, Francesca Racioppi, Marija Raleva, Dinesh Sethi and Sara Wood.

We are particularly grateful to the following WHO staff members:

- Enrique Loyola and Ivo Rakovac for providing advice and data from WHO mortality and hospital admissions databases;
- Alexander Butchart for providing very useful comments and sharing references;
- Colin Mathers for providing information on healthy life expectancy;
- Manfred Huber for providing very helpful comments;
- Dany Berluteau Tsouros and Patricia Søndergaard for help in obtaining references;
- Nicoletta Di Tanno for help in searching for and selecting photographs;
- Manuela Gallitto for administrative support;
- Srdan Matic for support and encouragement; and
- Francesca Racioppi for support, encouragement and thorough and helpful comments on initial drafts.

We are particularly grateful to our external peer reviewers for their very helpful comments and for contributing to improving the completeness and accuracy of this publication:

- Maria Teresa Bazo, Universidad del País Vasco, Bilbao, Spain;
- Jeffrey E. Hall and Debra Karch, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, United States of America; and
- Gloria M. Gutman, Simon Fraser University Gerontology Research Centre, Vancouver, Canada.

We thank:

- Robert Bauer, Austrian Road Safety Board, Vienna, Austria for providing data from the EU Injury Database;
- Joaquim J.F. Soares, Karolinska Institutet, and Maria Gabriella Melchiorre, Italian National Institute of Health and Science on Aging, Ancona, for material and information on the Abuse and health among elderly in Europe (ABUEL) project;
- Gabiele Meyer, University of Witten/Herdecke for information on intervention studies; and
- Gianfranco Salvioli, University of Modena, for information and material on elder maltreatment and care workers in Italy.

We are very grateful to the health ministry focal people for violence prevention who participated in the survey on the prevention of elder maltreatment and to the heads of country offices who helped coordinate the national responses.

Finally we thank Gauden Galea, Director, Division of Noncommunicable Diseases and Guenael Rodier, Director, Division of Communicable Diseases, Health Security and Environment, WHO Regional Office for Europe, for encouragement and support.

Dinesh Sethi was the lead editor. Sara Wood, Francesco Mitis, Mark Bellis, Bridget Penhale, Isabel Iborra Marmolejo, Ariela Lowenstein, Gillian Manthorpe and Freja Ulvestad Kärki contributed to the editing. The authorship of the chapters is as follows:

- Chapter 1: Dinesh Sethi and Francesco Mitis
- Chapter 2: Dinesh Sethi, Francesco Mitis, Thomas Görgen and Freja Ulvestad Kärki
- Chapter 3: Isabel Iborra Marmolejo and Bridget Penhale
- Chapter 4: Sara Wood, Mark Bellis and Christopher Mikton

- Chapter 5: Ariela Lowenstein, Gillian Manthorpe, Dinesh Sethi and Francesco Mitis
- Annexes: Francesco Mitis and Dinesh Sethi

We are grateful to the following experts for contributing valuable case studies of elder maltreatment in the WHO European Region:

- Box 1.2: Thomas Görgen
- Box 5.2: Dimitrinka Jordanova-Pesevska and Marija Raleva.

Thomas Görgen also shared valuable information and insights on programmes and policy.

The WHO Regional Office for Europe thanks the Department of Health in England and the Government of the United Kingdom for their generous support.

Dinesh Sethi, Sara Wood, Francesco Mitis, Mark Bellis, Bridget Penhale, Isabel Iborra Marmolejo, Ariela Lowenstein, Gillian Manthorpe

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