Inflicted Bruising Study
Conceptual and Operational Definitions of Physical Abuse

**Conceptual Definition:**

Physical elder abuse is the non-accidental use of physical force by someone in a trust relationship that may result in bodily injury, physical pain or impairment of an older adult (age 65 or greater).

**Clarification:**

1. The perpetrator is someone in a trust relationship, defined as: A caregiving relationship or other familial, social or professional relationship where a person bears or has assumed responsibility for protecting the interests of the older person or where expectations of care or protection arise by law or social convention.

2. The victim’s vulnerability is associated with aging, such that all victims are age 65 or older.

The Operational Definition of physical abuse for this study:

- Does not include sexual abuse
- Does not consider the perpetrator’s intent
- Does include improper physical restraint, however there is a concern about defining physical restraint too narrowly when restraint can also be used to enhance the elder’s safety.
- Does not include physical neglect or deprivation by others; these are categorized as neglect not physical abuse.
- Does not include threats with a weapon, but does include use of a weapon that “may result in bodily injury, physical pain or impairment”
- Does not include chemical restraint
- Does not require evidence of harm. Evidence of risk of harm is sufficient.

As adopted by LEAD Panel 2/17/06: Lisa Gibbs, MD, Solomon. Liao, MD, Laura Mosqueda, MD and Diana Schneider, MD