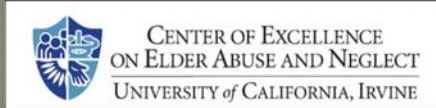


Mistreatment of People with Dementia by their Caregivers

University of California, Irvine School of Medicine
Program in Geriatrics

Funded by the California Department of Health Services



Methods

- 129 People with dementia and their caregivers were assessed for evidence of mistreatment as well as factors that might be related to mistreatment.
- Most of the data were provided by the caregivers.

The Study

- To investigate characteristics of people with dementia and their caregivers that are associated with mistreatment in order to inform clinicians about screening for mistreatment.

Detecting Abuse

- An expert panel agreed on definitions of three types of elder mistreatment.
 - Emotional abuse
 - Physical abuse
 - Neglect by others
- They met monthly throughout the study, considered the evidence, and decided on occurrences in each category.

Methods

- Statistical tests were conducted to determine which 'risk factors' were associated with mistreatment.

Caregiver characteristics associated with mistreatment

- Higher anxiety
- More depressive symptoms
- Fewer social contacts
- Greater perceived burden
- Two other measures of poor emotional well-being from a widely used survey (SF12).

The Findings

- 47% of participants with dementia (61) had been mistreated by their caregivers.
 - 42% (54) experienced psychological abuse
 - 10% (13) physical abuse
 - 14% (18) caregiver neglect.

Characteristics of the Person with Dementia associated with mistreatment

- More psychological aggression*
 - For example, swearing at the caregiver
- Any physical assault behaviors*
 - For example, pushing or shoving the caregiver

* It is important to note that the study does not determine whether these behaviors preceded or followed the mistreatment.

The combination of factors with the best sensitivity and specificity

If the person with dementia engages in either or both of the following behaviors :

- Repeated psychological aggression
- Any physical assault behaviors

There is significant likelihood that the person with dementia is being abused or neglected.

If you suspect a person with dementia is being abused or neglected

- Make a report to Adult Protective Services, the Long-Term-Care Ombudsman or Law Enforcement

Implications

- Caregivers should be asked about the behavior of the person with dementia.
- Based on their responses, follow-up questions about their own behavior may bring mistreatment to light.