

**The National Academies of Sciences,
Engineering, and Medicine Virtual Meeting
Workshop on
Quality of Life for Individuals with
Dementia: Preventing Elder Abuse
July 8, 2020**

Cynthia Huling Hummel:

BS, MDiv, & DMin.

Advisory Panel Co-Chair & Discussant

Rev. Dr. Cynthia Huling Hummel

Disclosure:

Nothing to Disclose
No conflicts of Interest

Additional certifications
and training:
Specialized Training
in Supporting Victims
and Survivors of
Domestic Violence



Types of Abuse

- **Emotional:** verbal assaults, threats of abuse, harassment and intimidation
- **Neglect:** failure to provide necessities, including food, clothing, shelter, medical care or a safe environment
- **Confinement:** restraining or isolating the person
- **Financial:** the misuse or withholding of the person's financial resources (money, property) to his or her disadvantage or the advantage of someone else



Additional Types of Abuse

- **Sexual abuse:** touching, fondling or any sexual activity when the person is unable to understand, unwilling to consent, threatened or physically forced
- **Willful deprivation:** willfully denying the person medication, medical care, food, shelter or physical assistance, and thereby exposing the individual with Alzheimer's to the risk of physical, mental or emotional harm
- **Self neglect:** Due to lack of insight and cognitive changes, a person with Alzheimer's may be unable to safely and adequately provide for day-to-day needs, and may be at risk for harm, falls, wandering and/or malnutrition

<https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/safety/abuse>

- **Abuse of People with Dementia by Family Carers: Representative Cross Sectional Survey** by Claudia Cooper, Amber Selwood, Martin Blanchard, Zuzana Walker, Robert Blizzard and Gill Livingston. *BMJ: British Medical Journal* [Vol. 338, No. 7694 \(Mar. 7, 2009\)](#), pp. 583-586 (4 pages) Published By: BMJ
- **Objective:** To determine the prevalence of abusive behaviours by family carers of people with dementia. **Design:** Representative cross sectional survey. **Setting:** Community mental health teams in Essex and London. **Participants:** 220 family carers of people newly referred to secondary psychiatric services with dementia who were living at home. **Main outcome measure:** Psychological and physical abuse (revised modified conflict tactics scale). **Results:** 115 (52%, 95% confidence interval 46% to 59%) carers reported some abusive behaviour and 74 (34%, 27% to 40%) reported important levels of abuse. Verbal abuse was most commonly reported. Only three (1.4%) carers reported occasional physical abuse. **Conclusions:** Abusive behaviour by family carers towards people with dementia is common, with a third reporting important levels of abuse and half some abusive behaviour. We found few cases of physical or frequent abuse, although those with the most abusive behaviour may have been reluctant to report it.

How Many Older Americans are Abused?

- Approximately 1 in 10 Americans aged 60+ have experienced some form of elder abuse. Some estimates range as high as 5 million elders who are abused each year. One study estimated that only 1 in 14 cases of abuse are reported to authorities.
- Source: <https://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/elder-justice/elder-abuse-facts/>

The Prevalence of Abuse Among those living with dementia

- Recent studies show that nearly half of those with dementia experienced abuse or neglect.
- Interpersonal violence also occurs at disproportionately higher rates among adults with disabilities.

Source: <https://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/elder-justice/elder-abuse-facts/>

Risk Factors for Domestic Violence for those Living with Dementia

- Social Isolation
- Cognitive impairment
- They may not recognize what is happening is abuse
- They may not know how to report it or how to get help.



Who are the abusers of older adults?

- Abusers are both women and men. In almost 60% of elder abuse and neglect incidents, the perpetrator is a family member. Two thirds of perpetrators are adult children or spouses
- Source: <https://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/elder-justice/elder-abuse-facts/>

Tee Shirts created by
Cynthia Huling Hummel
for the 2019 Community Arts of Elmira
Domestic Violence Awareness Art Exhibit



Possible Areas for Research

- What interventions and safeguards are most effective in stopping abuse against those living with dementia in both home and care settings?
- What help and supports are available for those with dementia who have been physically, sexually or psychologically abused?

Related research possibilities

- To what extent are those living with dementia able to consent to a sexual relationship?
- What research is there that addresses the issue of intimacy and cognitive capacity?
- To what extent is physical intimacy addressed in care planning?

Unmasking Fraud and Scamming

- Consider research to better protect those living with dementia.
- What oversights are in place that seem to help? What more might be done?
- Who are the partners in this endeavor?

