

OCURRENCE OF DOMESTIC ELDER ABUSE

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Introduction

Violence is associated with a lack of adequate living conditions and the infringement of rights, laws and social rules, which are manifested by crimes and conflicts, in the rural and urban contexts.

Population aging is a worldwide phenomenon. Elderly people face many difficulties, most of which result from weakness and vulnerability caused by their physiological condition. These may convert elderly people into potential victims of increasing social violence.

On the one hand, the increasing number of elderly people in the population entails the need to restructure the family. On the other, the emergence of social, economic and political problems exposes elderly people to greater violence within the family context.

Objective

Verify the occurrence of domestic elder abuse, surveying possible related factors, aggressors and injuries caused, in accordance with the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10).

Methodology

Population/Sample

Results and Discussions

Table 1 - Sociodemographic, social characteristics and medical care to abused elderly people and their aggressors, Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil, 2002.

Characteristics	Male		Female	
	Nº	%	Nº	%
Age group (years)				
60 - 64.9	17	33.3	12	33.3
65 - 69.9	16	31.4	15	41.7
70 - 74.9	12	23.5	5	13.9
75 - 79.9	3	5.9	1	2.8
80 >	3	5.9	3	8.3
Marital status				
Married	24	50.0	14	38.9
Widowed	15	31.3	14	38.9
Single	5	10.4	3	8.3
Divorced	3	6.3	5	13.9
Living together	1	2.1	-	-
Aggressors				
Partner	4	7.8	7	19.4
Friend	15	29.4	5	13.8
Other people specified	24	47.0	17	47.2
Other people non-specified	8	15.6	7	19.4
Care Level				
No care	28	54.9	22	61.1
Primary	18	35.3	9	25.0
Secondary	2	3.9	-	-
Tertiary (Hospital)	3	5.9	5	13.9

Although the population can file complaints, this problem is still subnotified: elderly people are afraid of accusing abuses practiced by their families.

Literature points out that, besides family structure difficulties, family relations, mainly between generations, can contribute to the occurrence of abuse against elderly people. Physical injuries, which constitute the elderly' main complaint, can also be caused by other kinds of abuse.

Many authors, including Pillemer and Finkelhor (1992) in the USA, identified that abuses practiced by partners (58%) were more prevalent than those practiced by adult sons and daughters (24%). According to the same authors, this tendency has been changing in recent years, which is in accordance with our research findings.

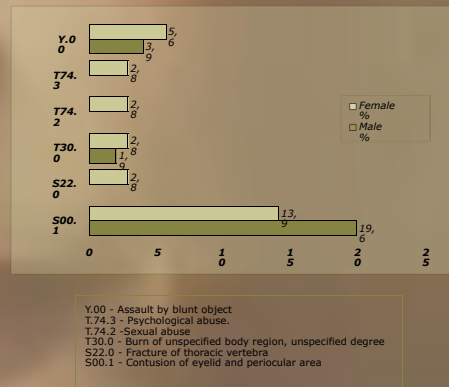
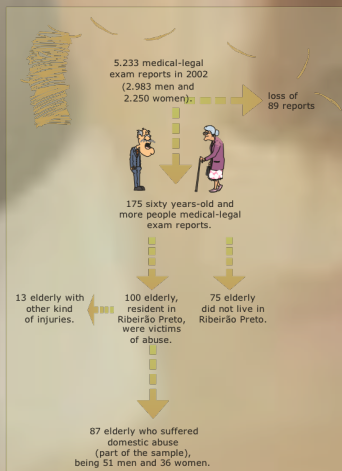
The health team can establish action strategies to consider violence in the ecological model (WHO, 2002), which means: 1 - individual (Aging biology and life history); 2 - Family and neighbors (in order to detect risk factors involving these persons and the elderly); 3 - Community context (social risk factors) and 4 - Social structure (family's dominion over the elderly person and social policies for elderly care).

Conclusion

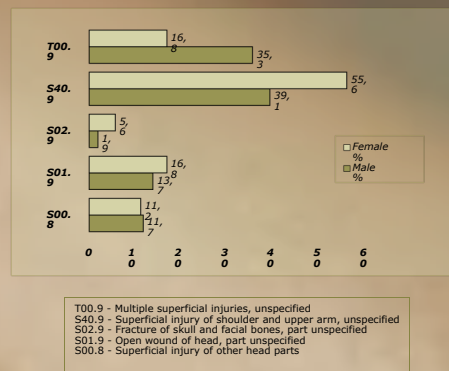
Elder abuse is becoming increasingly clear in society, which attributes a social and public health dimension to the phenomenon. There is an urgent need for knowledge about this reality, through the identification of risk factors and the victims' conditions and through systemized research, with a view to preventing abuse situations in the family sphere, as well as establishing public policies aimed at offering a family support structure within cultural contexts.

References

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Graph 1. Distribution of elderly people who suffered domestic abuse, according to gender and kind of injury caused, ICD-10, Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil, 2002.



Graph 2. Distribution of elderly people who suffered domestic abuse, according to gender and more than one kind of injury caused, ICD-10, Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil, 2002.

Place of study:

- We consulted every medical-legal report produced at the Ribeirão Preto Medical-Legal Institute, SP, Brazil, in 2002.
- We identified the population aged 60 and older and selected the cases of domestic elder abuse, using the ICD-10 classification.
- Medical-legal report forms: corporal injuries, carnal knowledge and libidinous act.

Instrument:

- Number of Police Station, age, gender, ethnic group, marital status, medical procedure after abuse, police record, external physical report and aggressor identification.
- Data were analyzed through descriptive statistics.