

# Elder abuse: Be cognizant of the many signs

**E**lder abuse is topic that was not discussed very much in the past, but is coming to the forefront now that the population is aging.

It often goes unnoticed because it can be difficult to recognize. Elder abuse can be defined as any action or failure to act by a person in a position of trust. Abuse can be physical, involving slapping, pinching, punching or other rough handling. Physical abuse can also include sexual assault or forced confinement.

Abuse can be financial, involving the dishonest use of a person's money or assets and can include overcharging for services or misusing a Power of Attorney.

Abuse can also be psychological—seniors can be verbally abused, humil-

iated, intimidated, threatened, not allowed to make decisions or deliberately socially isolated. Ignoring or treating a senior like a child is also a form of psychological abuse.

Abuse can take the form of neglect—when the necessities of life are withheld. This can include inadequate hygiene, giving too much or too little medication, or failure to ensure appropriate medical care.

Victims often do not report abuse because they don't believe that any-



911/  
411

Const. Laurel Barnett

one can help, or they fear that they may be placed in an institution. They may not know their rights, or are ashamed because their caregivers or family members mistreat them.

How can someone spot abuse? A victim may have cuts, bruises, burns, unexplained injuries, poor skin condition,

depression or avoidance of social contact. Financial abuse is harder to pin down. A victim may not have the funds for the necessities of life, or is missing jewellery or household items. They may be hesitant to discuss finan-

cial matters.

A victim may be showing signs of neglect if they are inadequately clothed, are malnourished or dehydrated, have an untreated medical condition, or a history of accidents or injuries.

The Halton Regional Police have a very comprehensive booklet available for seniors or their caregivers. It can be picked up at any police station in the region.

If you have any questions about this or any other police issues, contact me at laurel.barnett@hrps.on.ca or 905-878-5511 ext 2120.

—Const. Laurel Barnett is the community support officer for 1 Division

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