

Nursing students' recognition of elder abuse

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Background and context: The abuse of older people is recognised internationally as a widespread problem. It is important for nurses to report suspected elder abuse and, while on clinical placement, students have the opportunity to meet older people in different settings. Therefore a student nurse may have the opportunity to recognise and respond to abuse and provide appropriate support. However studies show that healthcare professionals fail to recognise abuse. Aims of the study were to: determine the proportion of first and third year nursing students (general and psychiatric) who correctly identify elder abuse in a vignette; to identify variables associated with the correct identification of abuse and to suggest factors and strategies to increase correct identification.

Methodology: All participants were given The Caregiver Scenario Questionnaire which measures recognition of elder abuse. Ethical approval was granted by the University ethics committee. The questionnaire comprised a fictional vignette about a son who cares for his mother who has dementia, followed by a list of 14 management strategies. Respondents rated each strategy on a 6-point Likert Scale. Some strategies are abusive and some are not.

Analysis: Data analysis is currently being undertaken using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 20) and descriptive and inferential statistics will be applied to determine correlations between demographic factors, education and experience and ability to identify elder abuse. The significance level was set up at $p < 0.05$.

Summary: This paper will present the findings of the first study undertaken in Ireland to examine recognition of elder abuse in nursing students.

Conclusions and implications: The findings will inform changes that need to be made to undergraduate curricula at national and international levels. It is expected that curriculum content will be improved to reflect the educational needs of student nurses regarding recognition of elder abuse.