



ADVANCING HEALTH EDUCATION & RESEARCH

AVA Research Reviews provides AVA members with recent published, peer-reviewed articles in a broad array of violence and abuse topics. The goal is to highlight and disseminate violence and abuse research in a timely fashion, and to enhance healthcare providers' practice by fostering the educational mission of AVA

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AVA Research Review

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Review Title: Elder Mistreatment among Chinese and Korean Immigrants

Reviewer: Charles P. Mouton, MD, MS, Meharry Medical College

Article: YS Lee, CP Kaplan, E. Perez-Stable. Elder Mistreatment among Chinese and Korean Immigrants: the Roles of Sociocultural Contexts on Perceptions and Help-Seeking Behaviors. *J Aggress Maltreat Trauma* 2014; 23(1): 20-44.

Introduction:

Elder mistreatment has been a growing problem since its recognition in the early 1970's. As part of the constellation of exposures to violence that impact one's health and personal well-being, it is important for Academy on Violence and Abuse members and others interested in violence research and prevention to have an

awareness of elder mistreatment, its etiology, risk factors, signs and symptoms, and strategies for prevention. Over 2 million US older adults are affected by elder mistreatment. This type of mistreatment cuts across all socioeconomic strata and relies on the perception of abuse as the major trigger for identification (self or other), reporting, and intervention. Due to the increasing racial/ethnic diversity of the "silver tsunami" of the growing older population, understanding the factors that influence this perception of mistreatment among older racial/ethnic minorities may be one key to a more robust reporting network. Understanding the racial/ethnic dynamics surrounding attitudes to elder mistreatment also adds to body of work that helps define this growing problem affecting the health of older adults. While the field of child abuse and intimate partner violence are more "mature," a growing literature

is helping us understand the factors surrounding elder mistreatment.

Article Summary:

Brief Overview of Problem:

Elder mistreatment (EM) is an international problem affecting the welfare of older adults. Over 2 million older adults in the US suffer mistreatment with it associated health effects of depression, early nursing home placement and increase mortality. Asian immigrants are less likely to report abuse than other groups and less likely to receive preventive services. Understanding perceived barriers and attitudes to mistreatment are necessary for the success of elder mistreatment preventive and services.

Aims/hypotheses of article:

The aim of this study was to identify the prominent meanings, values, normative expectancies, and contexts that characterize elder mistreatment in two Asian populations – Chinese and Korean immigrants.

Relevant Findings:

Qualitative analysis using grounded theory revealed that five major dimensions of EM; namely, psychological/emotional abuse, neglect by a trusted other, financial exploitation, physical abuse and sexual abuse.

Psychological /emotional abuse was the most frequently described, including two subdomains: verbal and nonverbal aggression (exclusion, isolation, intimidation, control, domination, and restriction of freedom). While overall the results were consistent with descriptions of abuse in the general population, six forms of psychological abuse were identified in both Chinese and Korean groups: disrespect, silent treatment, lack of love and affection, intense level of child care, isolation of elderly grandparents from grandchildren, and blaming elderly for their children's high levels of stress. Abuse included the concept of disrespect, including "the silent treatment", as being particularly abusive, since Asian communities place value on the veneration of their elders. Also mentioned was unpaid child care and housework by grandparents who were then evicted from the house once the grandchildren grow up.

Neglect by a trusted person was also considered a severe form of abuse in both communities. Some groups reported a lack of sincere intention to care for an older adult or refusal to provide emotional support as a serious form of abuse. Based on the tradition of filial piety, older

Chinese and Korean immigrants expect to live with their adult children, usually an eldest son and daughter-in-law. Failure to provide such living arrangements was viewed as neglect. In particular, sending an elderly parent to a nursing home was considered especially abusive. A form of neglect reported by Chinese immigrants was "half-day abandonment" where older adults were forced to stay out of the home during the day without provisions for food or appropriate care.

Both immigrant groups reported the problem of financial exploitation as abusive. This concept was juxtaposed against the traditionally -held concept of collectivism where there is familial group responsibility and financial resources are distributed among family members. Within the Korean group, unique forms of financial abuse included immigration related abuse (refusing to file immigration papers) and failure to provide a weekly allowance to elderly parents. Korean traditional culture dictates that adult children provide elder parents an allowance to meet their financial needs. Also, due to language barriers and unfamiliarity with the U.S. system, many older immigrants rely on their children to manage their financial affairs

which adds to their vulnerability to be exploited

Many of the forms of physical abuse seen in the general population were validated as abusive by Asian immigrants. Additionally, Asian immigrants cited pinching, forcing abuse victim to eat non-food items (urine) and depriving elderly of sleep as forms of physical abuse. These immigrant groups also noted a cultural tolerate of physical violence. Korean immigrants, especially, expressed acceptance of spousal elder abuse as part of their traditional patriarchal culture.

Authors' Conclusions:

The implications of this study for practice relate to the need to understand the cultural nuances of elder mistreatment as perceived by certain Asian populations. Clinicians should be alert to these nuances as they care for older, culturally diverse populations.

Reviewer's Comments:

Practitioners need to be aware that certain Asian populations experience mistreatment differently and have specific barriers to accessing services. This article is a reminder that interpretation of mistreatment exposure needs to take into account the aspects that are culturally driven.