

Elder abuse remains hidden problem as baby boomers reach old age

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Despite the 2010 passage of the Elder Justice Act, policy experts have found that combating widespread abuse of seniors is still not a top priority for care providers and governments alike. As many as one in 10 people age 60 and over are affected by this problem, according to the newest [Public Policy & Aging Report \(PPAR\)](#) from the [National Academy on an Aging Society](#), the policy institute of [The Gerontological Society of America](#). U.S. Senator Herb Kohl (D-WI) and U.S. Representative Peter King (R-NY), who have been heavily involved in legislation to address elder abuse, contributed introductory statements for the issue.

Elder abuse encompasses mistreatment, neglect, and exploitation of a physical, psychological, or sexual nature. The Elder Justice Act was signed into law as part of 2010's Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, yet it has received no appropriations to date.

PPAR article author Marie-Therese Connolly, JD, a 2011 recipient of a MacArthur Foundation fellowship, presents an extensive analysis of the numerous agencies with responsibility for addressing elder abuse but whose efforts continue to lack adequate coordination and direction. She currently is the director of the nonprofit Life Long Justice, a senior scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and is a consulting expert on the federal government's Elder Justice Roadmap Project.

"The human and economic toll exacted by elder abuse is vast, cruel, and

costly," said Connolly. "It's an issue where real federal leadership and a modest investment of resources — by Congress, the Administration, and private funders — could have a profound impact, mitigating the suffering of millions of people and saving billions of dollars."

She also found that the mistreatment of the senior population can cause a cascade of consequences with implications for the health and economic security of victim, family, community, and nation. Connolly demonstrated that elder abuse has been shown to increase rates of mortality, injury, and disease, as well as a four-fold increase in nursing home admissions.

Other authors focus on data showing that elder abuse remains seriously under-addressed by [public policy](#), as well as a recommended agenda for future research, education, training, and advocacy.

"We are humbled by the collective work of many pioneers and dedicated community, state, and federal organizations to combat the issues of [elder abuse](#), neglect and exploitation — all with the synergistic purposes to improve health and aging, to give voice to those victims who could not, and to protect an extremely vulnerable population from the egregious human right violations," said XinQi Dong, MD, MPH, a Rush University Medical Center professor who was instrumental in organizing this publication.

Provided by The Gerontological Society of America

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