

Verbal abuse of older adults: A disturbing influence on quality of life

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Newly published research from Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect (Routledge) has determined that verbal mistreatment is a highly prevalent concern among older adults in primary care clinics because of its relation to negative mental health outcomes including poor social functioning and major depression. *Verbal Mistreatment of the Elderly*, conducted by a research team from Northeastern University, is now available online with Free Access.

"Our work demonstrates that words can hurt and older adults who suffer from verbal mistreatment have serious sequela," said Terry Fulmer, a member of the research team. "All of us have a responsibility to better understand verbal mistreatment and develop interventions to help stop these unwanted behaviors. Further, we need to develop strategies that help older adults cope with verbal mistreatment."

A diverse sample of 142 [older adults](#) aged 65 and older were surveyed regarding verbal mistreatment, quality of life, and depressive symptoms. 38 percent of the sample reported having experienced at least one instance of verbal mistreatment from their primary caregiver. No significant differences were found among factors like age, gender, ethnicity, or marital status. Verbal mistreatment was not strongly associated with physical health, but showed significant detrimental effects on social functioning and mental health. In addition, respondents subjected to verbal mistreatment were three times more likely to report role limitations due to emotional problems.

The research team does offer future directions to alleviate this issue. "Future research should be directed at determining the best methods of intervening for patients who have reported verbal mistreatment. Sensitive and valid screening methods should also be developed to identify the patients who may be at risk for verbal mistreatment and identify patients that are currently experiencing some form of verbal mistreatment," as explained in the conclusion. "Screening methods are important in light of research that has suggested elder mistreatment is grossly under-reported."

More information: www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08946566.2013.801817

Provided by Taylor & Francis

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