Focus on Elder Mistreatment and Abuse

This issue of the *Journal of Gerontological Nursing* includes several interesting and informative articles related to elder mistreatment and abuse. This focus is relevant to gerontological nursing education, practice, and policy and is timely in terms of passage of the Elder Justice Act in 2010 (see Alford, 2011). It is important in that early identification and intervention has the potential to reduce and/or prevent elder mistreatment—a harsh reality for many older adults in both community and institutional settings.

One of my goals during “retirement” is to engage in national policy efforts related to topics I am passionate about. Among those is elder abuse/mistreatment. About a year ago, I became involved, as a member of the Project Guidance Group (PGG), with the Elder Justice Roadmap Project, an outgrowth of the Elder Justice Act. The PGG works closely with the U.S. Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services, as well as the Coordinating Council and Advisory Board established in the Elder Justice Act. We have identified key individuals, organizations, state representatives, and other stakeholders who represent diverse perspectives, regions, and populations to guide and advise our project through facilitated discussions and leadership interviews.

The goal of the Elder Justice Roadmap Project is to create a national roadmap to improve how we address elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and to inform both ongoing and emerging policy, practice, and research efforts at local, state, and national levels. We envision a number of products from this effort, including, but not limited to, white papers, refinement of assessment, and evaluation methods and conferences. Targeted “users” of these products include government officials, practitioners, policy makers, researchers, public funders, frontline responders, advocates, service providers, older adults, and those who care for and about them.

The approach we are taking uses concept mapping and priorities and concerns in the field of elder justice as a means to make concrete practice, policy, and research recommendations. For example, members of the PGG recently responded electronically to the prompt, “To effectively understand, prevent, identify, and/or respond to elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and/or to alleviate its consequences, we need _____.” A subgroup of PGG members will be convened (following Institutional Review Board exemption and Office of Management and Budget clearance) to review responses to the above prompt, cluster responses into domains, and further pilot test the importance and feasibility of the final domain structure identified. Working collaboratively, the PGG will develop a conceptual framework and implementation plan to move elements of the Elder Justice Act forward. I am pleased to be part of this historic effort and proud that gerontological nurses have been at the forefront of elder mistreatment over the past 3 decades. The articles in this issue—which provide individual examples and nursing interventions (Ziminski & Phillips, pp. 19-23); a breakdown of the risk factors, signs, and symptoms of abuse and how to report it (Hess, pp. 28-34); as well as elder abuse-specific evidence-based practice guidelines (Daly & Schoenfelder, pp. 11-17)—contribute to that effort.

**REFERENCE**

*Kathleen C. Buckwalter, PhD, RN, FAAN Editor*
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