



INTRODUCTION TO ELDER ABUSE IN FINLAND

Henriikka Laurola

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About us



- National non-governmental organisation founded in 1990
- Our goal is to raise awareness among decision makers, local and national authorities, professionals and citizens on the issue of elder abuse and neglect
- Training professionals and volunteers
 - Creating and implementing new working methods and practices
- Mentoring of professionals - advice and consultation
- Helping elderly victims of abuse, neglect and domestic violence:
 - The national free Suvanto Helpline and Legal counselling service
 - Individual advocacy and support
 - Peer support groups
- Spreading information about elder abuse
 - International and national projects
 - WEEAD campaigning and national and [local campaigns](#)

"A single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person" (WHO, 2014).

FEAR

POWER

SHAME

TRUST

GUILT



Prevalence in Finland

- **C. 9 % of women and c. 3 % of men** of over 65 years of age have experienced violence after their retirement age. Prevalence rate for abuse by spouse, child or relative was **2,5 % for men and 7 % for women**. The most frequent setting for abuse to occur was the older person's own home, both among men (46%) and women (82%). (Kivelä et al. 1993, 1995, 2001).
- **One in four women over the age of 60 have experienced violence or abuse within the past 12 months**. Emotional or psychological form of abuse was most common with prevalence rate of 21.1 %. Second most common form was financial abuse (6.5 %). followed by violation of rights (5.7%) and sexual abuse (4.6%) (AVOW project; Luoma, Koivusilta et al, 2010)
- **8-10% of family members report of maltreatment of their elderly loved ones in care facilities**. This appears mainly as psychological and social abuse as well as in neglect of necessary care. (Isola & Voutilainen, 1998; Rissanen et. al., 1999)

Findings from AVOW National Report (2010)

Violence against older women in Finland

- The most common **perpetrator is a partner or a spouse**. In cases of violation of rights (67.6%), physical abuse (57.9) and emotional abuse (44.7%) they clearly dominated the results.
 - In cases of neglect, the perpetrators are mainly children and care workers (both 25.3%)
- In the Finnish study the results on co-occurrence highlight that lots of **abuse occurs within one specific type** (15.1 %). When two types of abuse occur together, most of the time it concerns emotional abuse accompanying other types of abuse.
- **Bad physical health, depression and poor financial situation** can be considered as significant **risk factors**. They all have strong association with violence and abuse.

Violence as
an age- and
gender-
specific
issue?



Preventive and interventive measures in Finland

- 1) **Laws and regulations**
 - a) **Constitution:** The right to life, personal liberty and integrity as well as to social security.
 - b) **Legislation defining the duties of authorities** (The Act on the Status and Rights of Patients; Primary Health Care Act; Personal Data Act; Act on Supporting the Functional Capacity of the Ageing Population and on Social and Health Care Services for Older Persons, Act on Shelter Services)
 - National and regional supervisory authorities for welfare and health (VALVIRA, AVI)
 - c) **Criminal Code** (physical, sexual and financial crimes, neglect)
- 2) **National quality recommendations** (Quality recommendation to guarantee a good quality of life and improved services for older persons; National Framework for High-Quality Services for Older People)
- 3) **Ethical principles for health and social care professionals** (several publications)

Legislation defining the duties of authorities

Social Welfare Act section 36

In urgent cases the *need for social services shall be assessed without delay*. In non-urgent cases the municipality is responsible for providing *persons aged 75 years or over* access to an assessment of the need for social services at the latest on the seventh weekday.

Update 1.4.2015: the municipalities are obligated to provide support and social services for the needs of victims of violence, abuse or neglect.

Act on Supporting the Functional Capacity of the Older Population and on Social and Health Care Services for Older Persons

Section 25 – Informing of an older person’s service needs

- If a health or a social care professional or a person employed by the rescue services in the area, the Emergency Response Centre or the police has been informed of an older person in need of social or health care services who is obviously unable take care of himself or herself, his or her health or safety in the future, the health care professional or employee ***must confidentiality provisions notwithstanding*** notify thereof the authority responsible for municipal social welfare.

International commitments and the changing regulatory landscape

- Finland ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS No. 210) in April 2015 ([Istanbul convention](#)).
- **Shelter services to be regulated by law** and to be financed by the Finnish government
- **State-wide free of charge 24/7 telephone helpline** to be established and organized by third sector agencies, including Suvanto
- Many improvements to come but there's still a lot to do....
 - Setting up *easily accessible* shelters in sufficient numbers
 - Setting-up easily accessible rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres
 - Are the various special needs of victims of abuse taken sufficiently into account?
 - Is the responsibility of providing services shared in a balanced and reasonable way between governmental agencies, NGOs as well as regional and local authorities?

"I have nothing left to lose. I cannot bear feeling ashamed and always covering these problems. I want the violence in our family to end here and now. This is my duty in life, and I want to work for this goal. Perhaps I can even get a few peaceful years at the end, a reward for me to enjoy"



Grazie
mille!



More information on Suvanto:

www.suvantory.fi



www.juurihanke.fi

www.katketytaanet.fi

My contact details:

Henriikka Laurola

henriikka.laurola@suvantory.fi

Tel. +358 50 557 0012

