

families, with most abuse victims being female. Most abusers have a negative social and psychological profile. Sadly, in many cases elder abuse is spousal abuse grown old.”<sup>26</sup>

Pearl McKenzie of North Shore Community Services noted that within this family violence context, the terms tend to differentiate excessively among the victims: “We talk about child abuse, about wife abuse, and about elder abuse; but there are some similarities that go right across all those abuses in our society.”<sup>27</sup> Among the similarities, she noted that the abuser dominates and controls; it involves a betrayal of trust between intimates; the victim is isolated; the adult victims are usually women and the abusers are usually male.

While age was the essential criterion for being considered as elder abuse, witnesses noted that it presented an irrelevant distinction for describing abuse that was continuing from earlier years. As Katrina Johnson of the U.S. National Institute on Aging pointed out, “when you are 55 years old and your husband abuses you, it is called spousal abuse. However, when you are 65 years old and the abuse is still occurring, it is called elder abuse.”<sup>28</sup>

The fact that elder abuse is based on a distinction in terms of age can create a blind spot for service providers and lead them to overlook ways of assisting the older person who is being abused. Judith Wahl of the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly told the Committee of one social worker who called her: “She was trying to assist a senior who was being victimized by her husband. It was a classic case of spousal assault. She described the problem to me and asked how they could assist. I asked if they had thought of various services...I mentioned an emergency shelter for the woman, because she needed to get out of the home; trying to get her financial resources back using our service to help her to deal with some of the legal issues; getting emotional support through counselling services, since this woman

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<sup>26</sup> Darrah, 2:7.

<sup>27</sup> McKenzie, 8:6.

<sup>28</sup> Johnson, Presentation to Sub-Committee, Washington, D.C., April 29, 1993.