

C. Educating Service Providers

The importance of post-secondary curriculum development in building an inter-disciplinary approach between all service providers dealing with the elderly was stressed by several witnesses. Elaine Scott observed that "...it's important that all of the professionals are working together so that physicians know what they can receive in the way of services from a social worker or from a nurse, so that nurses and physicians are talking the same language, so the police know what their responsibility is."⁵³

Michel Couture talked about "filling a need, which is to build a bridge between social services and the elderly."⁵⁴ In addition to the physicians, nurses and social workers, other witnesses mentioned lawyers, accountants, police officers, religious leaders, bank officers, and institutional service providers as groups needing education about elder abuse.

Two professional groups, physicians and lawyers, were repeatedly centred out as needing specialized education about the elderly. Judith Leon spoke for several witnesses when she said: "Clearly we need to train our doctors much more in geriatrics, but the universities that try have a hard time. Geriatrics is not popular. It does not have the appeal that heart surgery or one of those things has."⁵⁵ Over-prescription of seniors was viewed as one issue requiring urgent attention. In a survey carried out by Senior Link, elderly residents indicated that many were taking ten to fifteen prescribed medications. It was noted that: "if you're taking more than five drugs, the likelihood of one of them being contraindicated for the other in some way is about 90%."⁵⁶ Judith Wahl talked about efforts to encourage specific programs on elder law and also to incorporate issues into existing courses that deal

⁵³ Scott, 1:13.

⁵⁴ Couture, 4:23.

⁵⁵ Leon, 9:11.

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