

term care facilities such as nursing homes, homes for the aged, public or chronic care hospitals, or anyone the older person relies on for basic need.¹⁹

Elizabeth Podnieks of the Ryerson School of Nursing, while acknowledging the large number of definitions, suggested that elder abuse is “an act, committed or omitted, by another person, that results in harm to or jeopardizes the well-being or safety of an older person.”²⁰

Lori Kartes, a member of the Ottawa-Carleton Hospital and Nepean Police Multidisciplinary Project, observed that: “When you look in the literature you see almost as many definitions of abuse as you find studies of the problem.” They chose the following definition for their project: “any harm to an older person caused by someone in a position of trust or authority. This could be a family member, neighbor, landlord or professional person, and this harm includes physical, financial, psychological abuse or neglect.”²¹ Their definition excluded victimization of the elderly by strangers.

While arguing that a change was needed, witnesses generally utilized the four major categories of abuse most common in the literature: physical, psychological, material or financial and neglect. Some noted other concepts such as “emotional and mental cruelty, chronic verbal abuse, violation of rights, self neglect, and active and passive neglect”.²² They also pointed out that older Canadians can be victims of more than one type of abuse simultaneously. In addition, the abuse may take place either in the home of the older person or in an institutional setting.

The four categories or manifestations of abuse were detailed as follows:²³

Physical abuse includes the “wilful, direct infliction of physical pain or injury, rough handling, shoving, slapping, pinching, hitting, kicking, restriction of freedom of movement, and sexual abuse;”

¹⁹ Darrah, 2:7.

²⁰ Podnieks, Presentation to Sub-Committee on Senior Citizens Health Issues, Overhead IIIa, February 16, 1993.

²¹ Kartes, 4:7.

²² Darrah, 2:7.

²³ Elaine Scott, Health and Welfare Canada, Presentation to the Sub-Committee, February 2, 1993, p. 2.