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Title: Detecting and reporting domestic abuse of the elderly: Mapping the practical concerns of experienced radiographers

Authorship

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Abstract

Background: While over 65,000 suspected cases of elder abuse are reported to English councils each year, it is estimated that upwards of 95% of incidences are either missed or not reported by healthcare professionals in emergency department settings.^[1] Despite the call from Murray and Devos^[2], two decades ago, for greater investigation of the extant and prospective role of radiographers in identifying abuse of the elderly, the broad phenomenon has continued to receive limited attention in medical imaging research.

Methods: Using a standard model of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis,^[3,4] extended semi-structured interviews with N=8 experienced plain radiographers were analysed.

Results: In A&E contexts, where safeguarding issues have primarily been the responsibility of a physician, it was reported that the degree to which physicians take account of radiographers' concerns about elder abuse is inconsistent at best. This had sometimes resulted in a borderline defeatist attitude among radiographers, who would now only raise such a concern if they were uncategorically certain it would be taken seriously. In the outpatient domain, where radiographers felt more in control of the medical process itself, progressively higher levels of confidence to take a lead around these matters were reported. Even here, however, participants routinely argued that the available information and clinical communication necessary for them to recognise potential elder abuse was often lacking in a way it was not around other forms of domestic abuse.

Conclusions: The analysis signposts some important issues around elder abuse and radiography that foregrounds, above all, the importance of clinical context and communication.

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