

Report on ONPEA Regional Conference April 30, 2014

I was pleased to note my tablemates were doing the PSW course. More training for care workers is one key to improving elder care.

It's Not Right

Margaret MacPherson presented It's Not Right. (A similar presentation was reported on by the PAC member who attended the 2011 ONPEA conference.) The New Horizons programme is providing funding for three years to expand the delivery of this workshop across Canada, targeting neighbours, friends and families. Neighbours are often the first people to realize someone is in trouble. There will be a conference on bystander engagement in May 2015.

Bystanders are advised to See it, Name It and Check It, i.e., recognize the signs of abuse, talk to the older person about it then check with professionals who can help.

Abuse includes financial and emotional abuse. Warning signs include injuries (especially if the explanation sounds improbable), changes in behaviour such as fearfulness or missing normal activities, evidence of financial changes such as cancelling services, activities, eating poorly, household items disappearing, etc. Middle-aged children moving back in with a parent can sometimes be for the parent's benefit, but at other times can be a significant risk factor. Abuse arises from an imbalance of power.

People often don't recognize their own behaviour as abusive. How to know?

Someone is afraid of you, you make decisions they could make for themselves, you use their money/possessions and feel entitled to do so, you put your own needs ahead of that person.

When talking to the older adult, express concern gently and avoid using "you should..." or blaming the victim for not being more assertive. Offer a sympathetic ear and create an environment for disclosure. Even if there is no disclosure it may trigger the person taking action for themselves. We did some role plays of scenarios.

If there is disclosure, look into professional assistance which varies by region. Every police department has an officer or unit which can help.

Margaret MacPherson is willing to travel to present to RTO groups (though her expenses would need to be covered) and is interested in working with members who would like present the workshop themselves in their Districts to the broader community. We need to reach bystanders, not just care professionals. (Even high school students are suitable audiences, perhaps in conjunction with Grey Area, below.) Are we interested in helping to spread the word? www.itsnotright.ca or contact m.macpherson@execulink.com

Grey Area

This is a musical play (also funded under New Horizons) depicting issues around elder abuse, performed by high school students from Walkerville Collegiate in Windsor. The target audience is high school

students. The plan is to do live performances in Windsor-Essex high schools and nearby area but for those further afield the performance was being recorded so a DVD will be available.

Panel on Reporting Abuse

Chatham-Kent Legal Clinic discussed powers of attorney for property and personal care. This is best done well before it is needed, choosing a trusted individual and including language which makes it clear that the POA is only used when the individual is incapable of acting on their own behalf. Assume people can make decisions unless proven otherwise. Appointing multiple attorneys to act jointly can prevent siblings from feeling excluded and provide a system of checks and balances. Watch for undue influence as POA is open to misuse. Some financial abuse can fall under the Criminal Code.

A speaker from the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care talked about abuse in homes. There is a move to charge staff who fail to report abuse they witness as well as the actual abusers.

An inspector from the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority (RHRA), told us that in 2010 the Retirement Homes Act increased protection for residents. The fundamental principle is that a "retirement home is to be operated so that it is a place where residents live with dignity, respect, privacy and autonomy, in security, safety and comfort and can make informed choices about their care options." Each retirement home must clearly display the residents' Bill of Rights. There is a register of homes online giving detailed information about each home. <http://www.rhra.ca/en/register/> Inspectors investigate suspected abuse and have extensive powers of investigation, including the power to have a home closed down. Complaints investigated cover more than abuse and often deal with food. 1 855 ASK RHRA.

Follow up questions raised an interesting issue of a lack of suitable nursing home placements for residents with "behaviour issues." Many are in a holding pattern in hospital beds. The panel members felt a political solution needed to be found, providing adequate funding for a high level of care.

There is a wealth of info available on recognizing abuse and how to follow up at www.onpea.org

Linda Taberner

Spring 2014

Chatham Kent