

C.6. Violence and sex

Violence against older adults in Portugal: findings from the first national prevalence study

Irina Kislaya

I Kislaya¹, AJ Santos¹, R Nicolau², AP Gil¹

¹Department of Epidemiology, National Health Institute Doutor Ricardo Jorge (INSA), Lisbon, Portugal

²General Directorate for Territorial Development, Lisbon, Portugal
Contact: irina.kislaya@insa.min-saude.pt

Background

The social phenomenon of violence against older adults is nowadays recognized as a serious public health problem. Accurate estimates of prevalence of violence are fundamental to design effective prevention and intervention strategies. This study aims to estimate 12-months prevalence of violence (financial, psychological, physical, sexual and negligence) against older adults in family settings in Portugal and examines the association of violence with socio-economic and health characteristics.

Methods

Through a telephone survey, with nationally representative stratified probability sample of adults aged 60 and over (N=1123), we evaluated 12 forms of harmful behaviour, within the framework of Portuguese legal system and collected a data on socio-economic and health characteristics. Design-adjusted Rao–Scott version of Pearson's chi-square test was used to examine the association of violence with a number of factors, including gender, living arrangements, social support and health status.

Results

Overall, 12.3% (95% CI=9.9-15.2%) of the older adults reported experience of violence in family settings. The prevalence rates of violence were: psychological 6.3% (95% CI=4.7-8.5%), financial 6.3% (95% CI=4.5-8.6%), physical 2.3% (95% CI=1.4-3.8%), negligence 0.4% (95% CI=0.1-1.4%) and sexual 0.2% (95% CI=0.01-1.1%). Gender and age were significantly associated with violence. Woman were more

likely to report violence experience ($p=0.031$; OR=1.84; 95% CI=1.05-3.22), as well as the age group of 80+ years ($p=0.001$). People living alone were more likely than those living with others to experience violence ($p=0.028$; OR=1.84; 95% CI=1.06-3.19). Individuals who had at least one long-term illness ($p=0.002$; OR=2.72; 95% CI=1.4-5.26) and those reliant on help with the day to day activities ($p<0.001$; OR=2.85; 95% CI=1.61-5.05) had higher risk of mistreatment compared to healthy individuals. There was no significant association of violence with use of social services ($p=0.763$).

Conclusions

This study allowed to estimate the prevalence of different forms of violence against older adults in the family settings in Portugal and to identify characteristics of victims, which are the first steps in designing effective public health intervention strategies.

Key message

- The first national prevalence study provides the evidence that the problem of violence in family settings affects 123 per 1000 older adults in Portugal and requires public health intervention.