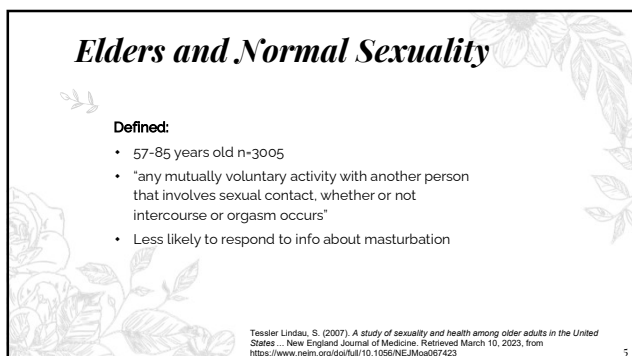


Sexuality, Sexual Abuse and Dementia

Katie Prigel Sharp, LMSW

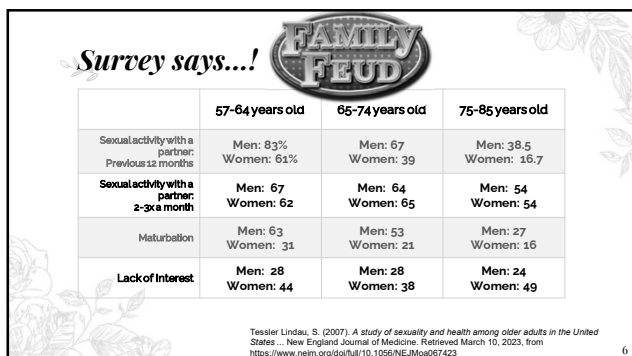



Elders and Normal Sexuality

Defined:

- 57-85 years old n=3005
- "any mutually voluntary activity with another person that involves sexual contact, whether or not intercourse or orgasm occurs"
- Less likely to respond to info about masturbation

Tessler Lindau, S. (2007). A study of sexuality and health among older adults in the United States ... New England Journal of Medicine. Retrieved March 10, 2023, from <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa067423>



Survey says...! 

	57-64 years old	65-74 years old	75-85 years old
Sexual activity with a partner: Previous 12 months	Men: 83% Women: 61%	Men: 67 Women: 39	Men: 38.5 Women: 16.7
Sexual activity with a partner: 2-3x a month	Men: 67 Women: 62	Men: 64 Women: 65	Men: 54 Women: 54
Masturbation	Men: 63 Women: 31	Men: 53 Women: 21	Men: 27 Women: 16
Lack of Interest	Men: 28 Women: 44	Men: 28 Women: 38	Men: 24 Women: 49

Tessler Lindau, S. (2007). A study of sexuality and health among older adults in the United States ... New England Journal of Medicine. Retrieved March 10, 2023, from <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa067423>

Sexuality and Dementia

- Remember progressive disease
- Interpretation of behaviors
 - Sexual vs soothing or communicating other needs
- Be aware of own biases and level of comfort

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Problematic Sexual Behaviors and Dementia

Masturbating	<i>Is this a problem?</i>
Removing clothing	
Non-consensual touching	<i>If so, who is it a problem for?</i>
Sexual oriented conversation	
Holding hands, cuddling, kissing or hugging	<i>Is this a signal for another need?</i>
Laying in bed with another resident	
More intense forms of sexual contact	

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Capacity to Consent

- Capacity vs Competency

Three Areas in Assessing Capacity:

1. Awareness of Relationship
2. Ability to Avoid Exploitation
3. Awareness of Potential Risks

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Three Areas in Assessing Capacity

1. Awareness of Relationship

- Do they know who is initiating sexual contact?
- Do they know their relationship with the person?
- And can they articulate the level of intimacy they are comfortable with?

2. Ability to Avoid Exploitation

3. Awareness of Potential Risks

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Three Areas in Assessing Capacity

1. Awareness of Relationship

2. Ability to Avoid Exploitation

- Is behavior consistent with values/behaviors prior to dementia?
- Can they recognize idea of choice and doing something voluntarily?
- Do they have all the information needed to make a decision?
- Does the person have a guardian?

3. Awareness of Potential Risks

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Three Areas in Assessing Capacity

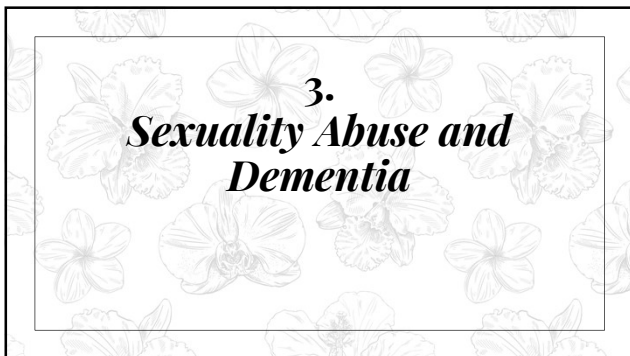
1. Awareness of Relationship

2. Awareness of Potential Risks

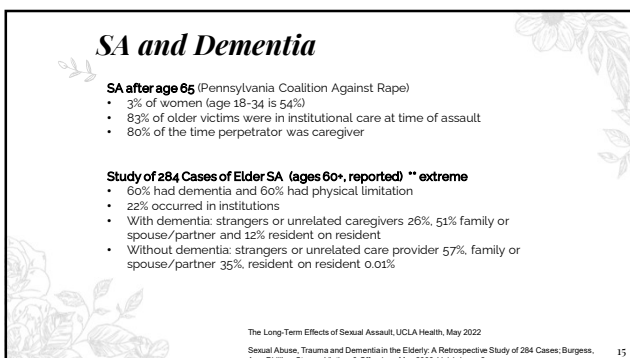
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- Is behavior consistent with values/behaviors prior to dementia?
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3. *Sexuality Abuse and Dementia*



SA and Dementia

SA after age 65 (Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape)

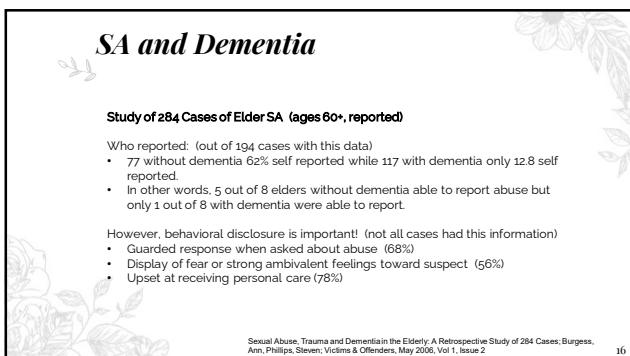
- 3% of women (age 18-34 is 54%)
- 83% of older victims were in institutional care at time of assault
- 80% of the time perpetrator was caregiver

Study of 284 Cases of Elder SA (ages 60+, reported) ** extreme

- 60% had dementia and 60% had physical limitation
- 22% occurred in institutions
- With dementia: strangers or unrelated caregivers 26%, 51% family or spouse/partner and 12% resident on resident
- Without dementia: strangers or unrelated care provider 57%, family or spouse/partner 35%, resident on resident 0.01%

The Long-Term Effects of Sexual Assault, UCLA Health, May 2022
Sexual Abuse, Trauma and Dementia in the Elderly: A Retrospective Study of 284 Cases, Burgess, Ann, Phillips, Steven, Victims & Offenders, May 2006, Vol 1, Issue 2

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SA and Dementia

Study of 284 Cases of Elder SA (ages 60+, reported)

Who reported: (out of 194 cases with this data)

- 77 without dementia 62% self reported while 117 with dementia only 12.8 self reported.
- In other words, 5 out of 8 elders without dementia able to report abuse but only 1 out of 8 with dementia were able to report.

However, behavioral disclosure is important! (not all cases had this information)

- Guarded response when asked about abuse (68%)
- Display of fear or strong ambivalent feelings toward suspect (56%)
- Upset at receiving personal care (78%)

Sexual Abuse, Trauma and Dementia in the Elderly: A Retrospective Study of 284 Cases, Burgess, Ann, Phillips, Steven, Victims & Offenders, May 2006, Vol 1, Issue 2

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Trauma and Memory

- PTSD vs traumatic event
- Trauma is in the eye of the beholder.
- Residual traumatic memories vs current trauma
- Emotional memories last longer than cognitive memories. (sensory memories)
- Memory recall/flashback vs current episode

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Residual Memory or Current Trauma?

- Look for new patterns of behavior! (frequency, duration, degree)
 - Agitation, depression, withdrawal, new regressive behaviors or negative sexual feelings, hypersexuality
 - Frequency, duration, degree
- Past history may be helpful, but be aware of false negatives
- Obviously, look for physical signs—SA rare to occur without other types of abuse.

Tetelman, J.L. and Copolillo, A.: Sexual abuse among persons with Alzheimer's Disease: Guidelines for recognition and intervention; Summer 2002, Alzheimer's Care Quarterly

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Residual Memory or Current Trauma?

- Use open ended questions.
 - Keep it simple.
 - Use their words/language
 - Avoid "why" questions.

Tetelman, J.L. and Copolillo, A.: Sexual abuse among persons with Alzheimer's Disease: Guidelines for recognition and intervention; Summer 2002, Alzheimer's Care Quarterly

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What to do?

- Use the team!
- Be aware of emotional quality in telling and whole picture

- ***Next steps?***
- Mandated reporting
- Be aware of SA exam risk as well as benefits
- Buddy up—protect them AND staff

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Thanks!

Any questions?

You can find me at kathryn.sharp@ascendhealth.com

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