Red flags for identifying elder abuse

PHYSICAL ABUSE
Fractures, burns, abrasions, bruises, hair or tooth loss, new hoarseness (strangulation)
Bullet: Does the story fit the injury?

SEXUAL ABUSE
Genital or anal pain, irritation, or bleeding, bruises on inner thighs, new difficulty walking or sitting, or patient complaint
Bullet: Usual personal care should not cause these symptoms
Bullet: Elder victims should be referred for a formal assessment by a sexual abuse response team

PSYCHOLOGICAL/EMOTIONAL/VERBAL ABUSE
Stress-related conditions, including elevated blood pressure, problems sleeping, depression, fear of caregivers
Bullet: Coexists with other types of abuse
Bullet: May be precursor for other types of abuse

FINANCIAL ABUSE
New “best friends”, unpaid bills, eviction notices, unusual activity in bank accounts, will, trusts, or deeds, patients being taken from nursing homes back to home care
Bullet: Truly often the “root of all evil” and root cause of other types of abuse, especially neglect
Bullet: Follow the money

NEGLECT/SELF-NEGLECT
Poor personal hygiene, bedsores, absence of necessities including food, water, or heat, animal or insect infestation, medication mismanagement
Bullet: Caregivers may have alcohol, drugs, or mental illness problems
TIPS FOR Identifying Elder Abuse

Facts

- About 10% of older adults suffer from elder abuse each month.
- The question is not IF but WHO in your medical practice is affected by elder abuse.
- Elder abuse causes suffering and increases both morbidity and mortality
- Healthcare providers are mandated reporters, but make very few reports.

Who To Call

When you have “reasonable suspicion” that an older or dependent adult is being abused or neglected, call:

- **Adult Protective Services (APS)** for people living in the community ♦ 1-231-351-5401
- **Long-Term Care Ombudsman in LA** for people living in a long-term care facility ♦ 1-800-334-9473 (if calling between 8am-5pm) or 1-800-231-4024 (if calling between 5pm-8am)
- **Elder Abuse Hotline** ♦ 1-877-477-3646
- **Law enforcement** or in case of **Emergency** ♦ 9-1-1
- **Area Agency on Aging** for information on resources and services for older adults in LA ♦ 1-800-510-2020