

Jason Ulsperger - Elder Crimes of the Law

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Elder crimes of the law abiding: Backwards dresses, covered up messes, and nursing homes

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Abstract

9

This article uses data from 75 biographies, autobiographies, and research monographs on nursing homes to explore physical neglect and abuse. Linked to crimes of the law abiding concepts, it implies employees see maltreatment as “normal.” It extends 5 lines of research examining bureaucratic forces and their influence on nursing homes. It also provides a history of elder 9 care in the UK and US and a review of structural ritualization theory. Findings concentrate on how rituals involving hierarchical structure, work efficiency, documentation, and rules adversely influence care homes. This includes physical maltreatment involving employee neglect of personal needs of residents, failing to provide medical help, bodily harm, and not maintaining quality living spaces.

Keywords

nursing home abuse, elder abuse, crimes of the law abiding, organizational deviance, structural ritualization theory

Introduction

One in three US nursing home residents experience elder abuse, and in the UK, 44 percent of senior maltreatment cases occur in care homes (BBC, 2013; Castle, Ferguson-Rome, and Teresi, 2013). Recently, New Yorker Cherrylee Young punched a resident causing him to fall on a piece of metal, which killed him (NBC, 2014). Karen Pedley of Carharrack, Cornwall, set a 96-year-old resident on fire (BBC, 2016). These cases are atypical. Most institutional abuse involves taken-for-granted work rituals that facilitate “crimes of everyday life” (Karstedt and Farrall, 2006:1011). Around 40 percent of nursing home employees have observed pushing, grabbing, shoving, kicking, and inappropriate feeding (Hillier and Barrow, 2015). Add other cases employees know of, and the number is 93 percent (Payne and Gainey, 2005).

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