

# **ELDER SELF NEGLECT**

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**Atlantic Philanthropies Grant**

**December 15 2009**

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# CASE REPORT

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- **77 YO WM In bed x4 years. Concern**
  - **Bleeding area on chest. Lived with wife.**
  - **Persistent refusal of help.**
  - **No contact with outside world.**
  - **Filth/squalor/unkempt.**
  - **Agreed hospitalization.**
  - **4 squamous cell cancers removed.**
  - **Refused psychiatric consult or SSRI;**
  - **MMSE 29/30. GDS 2/15. Discharged home.**
  - **Request from wife to conceal SSRI.**
  - **Dilemma**
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# DEFINITION

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- The behavior of an elderly person that threatens his/her own health and safety.

N.C.E.A. 2006

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# SELF-NEGLECT

- Historical
- Diogenes 5 Century BC
- Greek Philosopher
- Wealthy family lived in squalor
- Begged
- Spent days with lamp “Looking for an honest man”



- Hermits/Recluses

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Erskine 1953

- Aged Recluse

Granick/Zeman 1960

- Senile Breakdown

MacMillan BMJ 1966

- Diogenes Syndrome

Clark 1975

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# Suffragettes

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- Prison – Hunger strikes
  - Forced feeding – Lunatics
  - Asquith – “Cat and Mouse Act”
  - 1913 Derby - Davison threw herself under King’s horse and killed
  - “If this is what an educated woman does”
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# Gandhi

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- 15 + significant fasts
  - Fasting part of every day life
  - “Sitting Dhurna” – Recover a debt  
Creditor fasts to death or debtor pays
  - Outlawed 1860
  - 11-Day Fast 1932 - Untouchables
  - 21-Day Fast 1943 – “Quit India”
  - Little press coverage
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## Irish Experience

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- Thomas Ashe - 1917  
Forced feeding died
  - Terence MacSwiney – Lord Mayor of  
Cork  
1920 Brixton prison  
74 days
  - Outrage internationally
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# Role of Physicians

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- World Medical Association
  - Declaration of Tokyo 1975
  - Prisoner with capacity
  - Verified second M.D.
  - Respect decision
  - Declaration of Malta 1991
  - Ascertain wishes daily
  - When unable to decide
  - Doctor has prerogative “Best Interest”
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# SELF NEGLECT

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- Epidemiology:
    - Elder Neglect & Abuse – 2 Million U.S.
    - Prevalence 4% - 10%
    - Underreported
    - Self neglect most common form of abuse and neglect.
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# MORTALITY

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- 50% after 4 years
  - Females > Males **MacMillan 1996**
  - 25% in 3 weeks  
**Baker 1976**
  - 46% Hospital admissions  
**Clark 1975**
  - 18% 2 years  
**Wrigley 1992**
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- **13 year mortality self-neglect – 79%**
- **Control group – 60%**

**Lachs JAGS 1994**

- **CHAP Study:**

**One year mortality**

**270.36 deaths/100 person years**

**5.01 deaths/100 person years**

- **Mortality lower after 1 year**

**Dong, JAMA Aug. 5, 2009, Vol.302, No. 5**

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# SENILE BREAKDOWN

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- 72 Patients 1962 – 1965
- Longitudinal Study Nottingham
- Victim 5 characteristics
- Environment 10 characteristics
- 62 Female 12 Males
- Median Age 79
- Day Hospital vs Inpatient

**MacMillan/Shaw BMJ 1966**

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# SENILE BREAKDOWN

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- **Mental State 38 Abnormal /34 Normal**
- **Gradual withdrawal**
- **Precipitating event**
- **Alcoholism – 3**
- **Heavy drinkers – 20**
- **Frailty in majority**
- **Mobility problems 11**
- **Hospitalization deterioration**
- **Day care better outcome**

**MacMillan/Shaw BMJ 1966**

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# SELF-NEGLECT

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- Alcoholism
- US 1-3%
- Malnutrition
- Falls/Injuries
- Neglect/Isolation
- Depression
- Untreated Health Problems

**Blondell JEAN 1999 Vol. 11, No. 2**

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# SELF-NEGLECT

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- Social Typology
- Risk/Vulnerability Model
- External/Internal

Pavesa JAGS 2008

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# PRE MORBID PERSONALITY

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- Domineering, Quarrelsome
  - Independent, Unfriendly
  - Stubborn, Aloof, Suspicious  
**MacMillan 1966**
  - 25% - High Average IQ  
**MacMillan  
Cole 1992**
  - 15/30 – High IQ  
**Clark 1975**
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# SELF-NEGLECT

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- Capacity
- CREST Study
- 29% of self-neglecters pass screen for  
Dementia Depression

**Dyer et al JAGS 2008.**

**Vol. 56, No. 52**

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# SELF-NEGLECT

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- CREST Study Texas
- Adult Protective Services + Geriatric Assessment Team
- Three Domains Measured
- Hygiene/Environment/Function
- Self Neglect Severity Scale
- SNSS 37 Items

**Kelly Dyer et al JAGS  
2008, Vol. 56**

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# SELF-NEGLECT

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- **Ethical Issues**
- **Confluence of multiple factors**
- **Self-determination**
- **Personal independence**
- **Lifestyle choices**
- **Laws and regulations to protect adults**
- **Neglect on a sliding scale**
- **Variable threshold**

**Simmons/O'Brien JEAN**  
**1999 Vol. 11, No. 2**

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# SELF-NEGLECT

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- **Capacity**
- **Elements:**
  1. **Ability to understand diagnosis/condition/treatment alternatives and prognosis.**
  2. **Ability to relate personal values to the data.**
  3. **Ability to state ones decision/preferences based on above.**
  4. **Demonstrate ability to carry out decision.**



# SELF-NEGLECT

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- Capacity
  - Capacity Medical determination
  - Competence Legal determination
  - Dearth of appropriate tools
  - Executive dysfunction
  - Fluctuations in cognition/delirium
  - Who determines
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# SELF-NEGLECT

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- Public Health Issues
- Not a victimless activity
- Impact
- Neighbors, family, friends, community
- Balance personal vs community rights
- Communicable diseases protect public

**Sengstock 1999 JEAN**

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# SELF-NEGLECT

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- Management
  - Determine risk of imminent harm
  - Least restrictive/intrusive intervention
  - Build trust/continuity
  - Assistance in the home
  - Legal assistance
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# SELF-NEGLECT

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- Perfect Storm
  - Increase in Baby Boomers
  - Decline in economy
  - Decline in Social/welfare programs
  - Decrease in family support
  - Iraq PTSD
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