



# GRAND ROUNDS

June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and Judy Mayer of the Regional Assault Care Program at RVH is marking the designation by speaking to a variety of groups and church organizations about the hidden problem of elder abuse.

“We’re talking directly to seniors themselves so they are aware and know what to do if they’re in an abusive situation, and we’re speaking to the community, because the more they know about it, the better,” she explains.

Mayer is a patient care resource nurse and a member of the assault response team at RVH. She also chairs the Response Elder Abuse Prevention Awareness Coalition (REAPAC) of Renfrew County, a team of various service providers throughout Renfrew County who are working together to build awareness about the various forms of elder abuse. According to REAPAC, in Renfrew County it is estimated that

between 600 to 1,500 seniors are experiencing or have experienced abuse or neglect in later life.

Mayer states that elder abuse is a crime that is generally not talked about or even reported to authorities. Victims are usually abused by someone they know—a friend, family member, neighbour or paid caregiver who causes some form of harm.

Mayer explains that there are different types of abuse: physical, emotional/psychological, financial, sexual and neglect.

She says that while most would think that physical abuse is predominant, “the most common form of abuse in general is financial and property management,” adding that it’s often a victim’s own children taking advantage of money matters.

Seniors with disabilities such as mobility issues or sight loss are often at higher risk of abuse.

Older adults in families with a history of generational conflicts can be in an abusive situation and not even know it. “That’s just been their life, and they don’t know any different,” Mayer explains.

Other risky situations involve those who are living with a spouse or child who is unable to sustain steady employment or those living with a substance abuser. Also, someone who has difficulty living with stress is “more likely to abuse an older person.”

Preventing abuse starts with seniors being aware of their rights and the resources available in the community.

Much of the time people don’t know where to go or what to do, but Mayer encourages anyone who needs the help to turn to the RVH response team.

“Here we have specialized registered nurses on call seven days a week, 24 hours a day,” Mayer notes.

The assault care program also counsels family members and provides emotional support where needed.

Confidentiality is assured.

Mayer herself can be reached at (613) 432-4851 ext. 224 during regular office hours. Round-the-clock response can be accessed by phoning 1-800-363-7222.

However, if there’s a safety issue, Mayer advises to “go right ahead and call police. Dial 9-1-1.”



**Judy Mayer wants people to be aware of elder abuse and how RVH can respond.**