

Intervention for caregivers helps prevent elder mistreatment

OCTOBER 04, 2023 - Elder mistreatment is defined as “an intentional act or failure to act by a caregiver or another person in a relationship involving an expectation of trust that causes or creates a risk of harm to an older adult.” Through the Comprehensive Older Adult and Caregiver Help (COACH) intervention tested in this trial, coaches met with caregivers weekly for up to 12 sessions to listen to their concerns and guide them through a personally tailored behavioral and educational intervention. Participants were provided with caregiving tools and coping strategies and were also educated about mistreatment so they could be vigilant against abusive behaviors by themselves and others. Eighty caregivers were randomized to the COACH intervention or a control group.

Treatment group caregivers reported less mistreatment against their care recipient, which dropped from 22.5% at baseline to 0% following the completion of the 3-month intervention. In the control group, reported rates did not change significantly.

“COACH was created to benefit older adults who rely on a caregiver and are particularly vulnerable to harm. It now stands out as the first intervention that has been shown to prevent elder mistreatment,” said corresponding author Zach Gassoumis, PhD, of the University of Southern California. “Our study provides initial evidence that COACH may be immensely successful, and a potential lifeline for the millions of older adults who experience abusive behavior each year.”

Full Citation: “Comprehensive Older Adult and Caregiver Help (COACH): A person-centered caregiver intervention prevents elder mistreatment” Zachary D. Gassoumis, Julia M. Martinez, Jeanine Yonashiro-Cho, Laura Mosqueda, Anthony Hou, S. Duke Han, Bonnie Olsen, Anat Louis, Marie-Therese Connolly, Kylie Meyer, Kelly Marnfeldt, Sheila A. Salinas Navarro, Mengzhao Yan, and Kathleen H. Wilber. AGS; Published Online: October 04, 2023 (DOI: 10.1111/jgs.18597).

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