

Nursing Home Abuse Being Investigated; Facility Claims It Was a “Fall”

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The New Jersey State Health Department and Westfield, New Jersey police are currently investigating a claim of physical abuse of an elderly woman at a nursing home facility, who sustained severe injuries to her face.

The woman’s son claims his mother was physically abused, posting pictures on Facebook of his mother’s injuries which include two black eyes, facial wounds, and a swollen nose. The facility claims the injuries were the result of a fall, but the son says his mother frequently told him she was hit and treated roughly.

For detailed information on the claim, [click here](#).

Physical Abuse in Nursing Homes

Families that trust these facilities to care for their loved ones should be on the lookout for any unexplained injuries, or even injuries whose explanations that don’t seem to match with the extent of the wounds or trauma, such as in the Westfield case. Elder abuse and neglect in nursing homes is a serious problem, and with more than half a million cases being reported in the US each year, abuse is more common than you may think. It’s important to stay vigilant in looking for signs of possible abuse, which can present itself in some of the following ways:

- Bruising or welts

- Broken or sprained bones
- Signs of restraint
- Facility employees refusing to allow you to be alone with the individual

Falls as a Result of Neglect

In the event no physical abuse caused the injuries, the instance of a fall could still come under the category of neglect and abuse depending on the situation. Neglect makes up more than half of all the elder abuse claims, and unwitnessed falls, where employees of the facility claim to have not seen the resident fall, are a cause for concern.

Nursing homes have a “duty of care” toward their residents and that includes assessment for fall risks, setting up appropriate care plans to minimize the chance of a fall, and implementing appropriate medical equipment and staff assistance as needed to support their plan.

Any type of fall should be looked into, but unwitnessed falls are especially concerning. Without the right number of staff to attend to residents, it’s much more likely a resident will ultimately wind up falling as they attempt to move on their own or perform activities that would typically require assistance, such as getting dressed. Wet floors, poor lighting, and misplaced items left in walking spaces can all also be causes of preventable falls.

How Protect Your Loved Ones in Nursing Homes and Long-Term Care Facilities

If you are in any way concerned about your loved one, don’t hesitate to take the necessary steps to protect them. Despite the rising number of nursing home abuse claims, many are still unsure whether their situation qualifies or feel intimidated by the prospect of saying something. Because those in nursing homes and long-term care facilities are often vulnerable and unable to advocate for themselves, being their voice can provide much needed protection against potentially dangerous situations.

Speak to the nurses and heads of the facility about any concerns. If necessary report what’s occurring to the Department of Health, your local Ombudsman, and even the police; these sources are trained to investigate your report and act in the best interests of the residents.

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