



TAM – Telefono Anziani Maltrattati

Activity July 2001 – December 2017

“Elder abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person...”¹

Foremost, elder abuse is a HUMAN RIGHTS’ VIOLATION

Elderly people can be abused in many different ways.

Following the standard European classification, these are the most common forms of abuse an old and fragile person can experience:

- Financial: deprivation of money or of property, attorney malpractice, extortions;
- Psychological: humiliations, emotional blackmail, insults, blame;
- Physical: beating, sexual abuse, escare;
- Medical: excess or deprivation of prescriptions delivery, care inadequacy;
- Negligence, active or passive: intentional or non-intentional care neglect

Other two forms could be added, in our opinion:

- Civic: legal protection abuse, restraint;
- Neighbourhood abuse: noise, other forms of bother

In the same way, there are different settings where abuse can be perpetrated:

- Home;
- Care homes;
- Community.

Speaking of the abusers, they are often and somewhat linked to the elderly abused. Leaving aside the increasing phenomenon (at least in Italy) of the financial frauds by strangers, who approach the elderly under the fake appearance of policemen or other public officials, the abusers here considered are typically family members or care givers, both formal and informal. The reason for the abuse, the settings and the motivations can be synthetized in the following tables and graphics².

¹ From the Toronto Declaration on the Global Prevention of Elder Abuse. Toronto, 2002

² From: T.A.M. Telefono Anziani Maltrattati. The syntethic table summarizes data collecetd during the helpline activity starting form July 2001 up to December 2016.



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Help-line activity 2001 – 2017

TOTAL CALLS RECEIVED	2607	100%
during hearing session	1293	50%
registered on answer phone	1314	50%

TOTAL RELEVANT CALLS	1612	100%
during hearing session	1089	68%
registered on answer phone	523	32%

TOTAL HEARING SESSIONS	1597	100
calls per hearing session	1,63	

DOSSIER OPENED	346	100%
abuse occurrences	164	47%
of which at present solved	122	35%

DOSSIER CLOSING LAPS	346	100%
within 2 weeks	67	19%
2 weeks - 1 month	69	20%
from 1 to 3 months	91	26%
from 3 to 6 months	34	10%
more than 6 months	31	9%

ABUSE COMPLAINING CATEGORIES	346	100%
Financial	69	20%
Negligence	77	22%
Psychological	98	28%
Physical	40	12%
neighbourhood civil rights	49	14%
Medical	13	4%

ABUSE SETTING	346	100%
Home	289	84%
residential care	45	13%
Others	12	3%



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VICTIMS' GENDER	346	100%
Males	98	28%
Females	248	72%

VICTIMS' AGE	346	100%
less than 70	55	16%
between 70 and 80	113	33%
more than 80	146	42%
not stated	32	9%

VICTIMS' CIVIL STATUS	346	100%
Widow	186	54%
Married	69	20%
Unmarried	50	14%
Divorced	19	5%
common-law husband/wife	0	0%
not stated	22	6%

WHO IS COMPLAINING	346	100%
Victim	135	39%
Family	126	36%
of which sons/daughters	82	
of which brothers/sisters	17	
Caregivers	13	4%
Neighbours	33	10%
Friends	11	3%
Others	20	6%
not stated	8	2%

ABUSERS	346	100%
Family	207	60%
of which sons/daughters	133	
others	64	
Caregiver	47	14%
Neighbours	42	12%
Friends	5	1%
Others	33	10%
not stated	12	3%



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MAIN MOTIVATION	346	100%
Greedy	63	18%
family history	59	17%
psychological frailty	81	23%
Negligence	54	16%
addiction (alcohol, drugs, ecc.)	14	4%
caregiver burnout	21	6%
Other	54	16%

PROFESSIONALS INVOLVED		
INTERNAL		
social assistant	75	22%
Psychologist	33	10%
legal advisor	82	24%
Geriatrician	23	7%
Others	109	32%
EXTERNAL		
social assistant	113	33%
Physician	49	14%
Family	5	1%
Psychologist	26	8%
legal advisor	25	7%
Friend	4	1%
Neighbour	5	1%
Others	58	17%

The sheet above shows the results obtained by T.A.M. help-line during years 2001-2017. Before analysing the figures, it's maybe useful to point out that the phone service – completely free for charge for the citizens – has been established - and is since then operated - by SOLIMAI soc. coop. a r.l..

Initially the service was exclusively addressed to the residents of Udine County. Currently, thanks to the wider accessibility of the site www.solimai.it, the whole national population can turn to T.A.M. to state its cases, being this help line the sole organized complaints' gathering-point within Italy. Notwithstanding, due to the fact that creation of help-line hubs is still difficult, the number of calls received can be considered quite small, especially when compared to the figures registered by other EU services.

T.A.M. is contributed by Regione Friuli - Venezia Giulia, which covers 80% of annual expenditure and *de facto* recognizes the service.

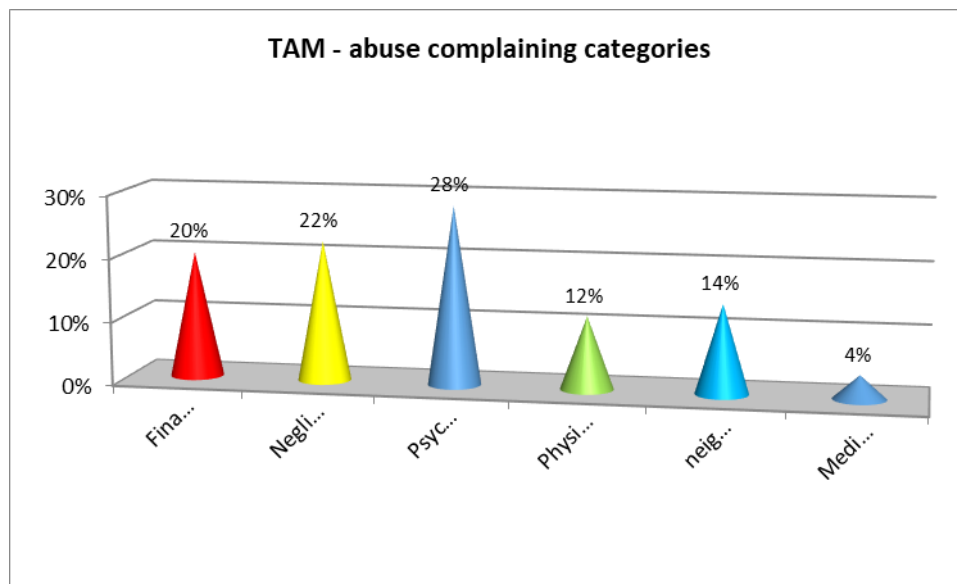
*SOLIMAI - soc. coop. sociale a r.l. - Via P. Valussi, 32 -33100 Udine
Tel. e fax 0432-235114
e-mail info@solimai.it*



What follows is a graphic representation of the figures listed in the above sheet. Generally what can be said is that, with reference to the phone calls judged as relevant to the opening of a dossier, the classes of abuses, victims and abusers are, in time, almost the same.

Between July 2001 and December 2017 T.A.M. volunteers received total **2400 calls**. The number could be considered quite small, especially when compared to the extension of the national Italian territory and to the numbers registered by the French help-line service. But if we consider that T.A.M. Udine is still the only organized hub operating in Italy, the figures can be considered of a certain regard.

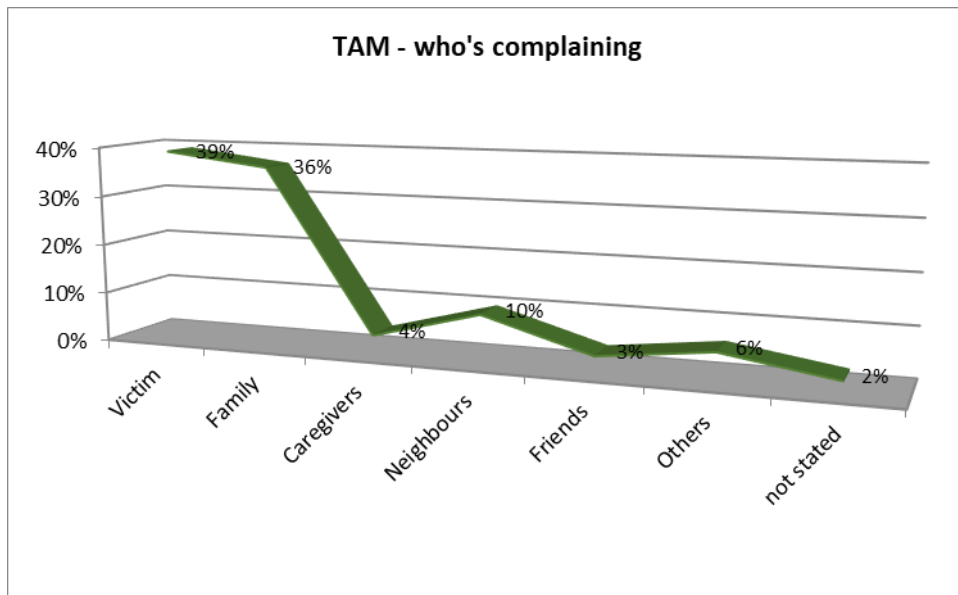
During the years the data collected and analysed showed a constant trend both in the “abuse complaining categories”, in the “complaining subjects” and in the “abusing subjects”.



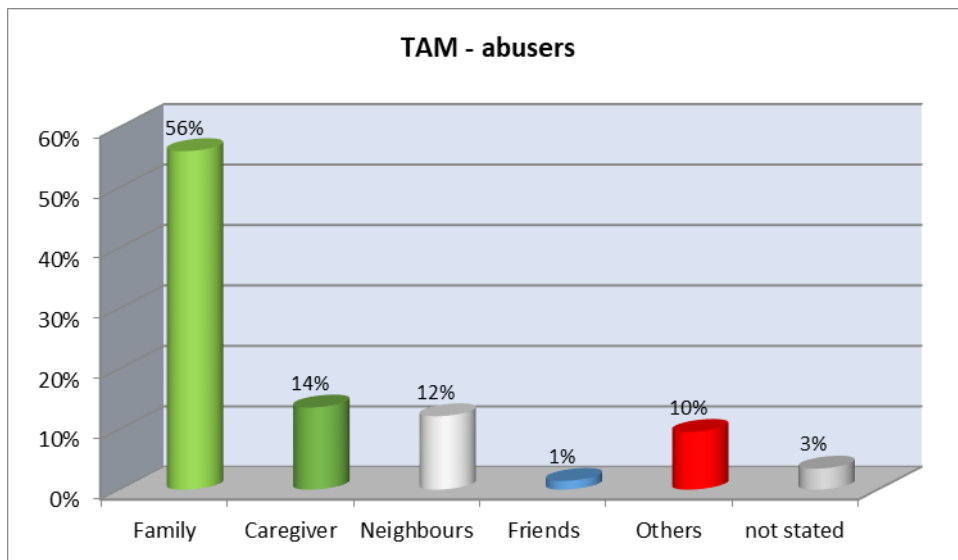
Generally speaking, and constantly during the years, the abuses most reported refer to psychological and financial mistreatment. Moreover, these two categories are often linked: a typical situation of an abuse within the family context is that of an emotional leverage in order to obtain financial advantages or benefits (i.e. the threat of an abandon if a certain sum of money is not accorded to that son or daughter). This situation is even more common – or even accepted – in times of economic crisis like the one we’re now facing.



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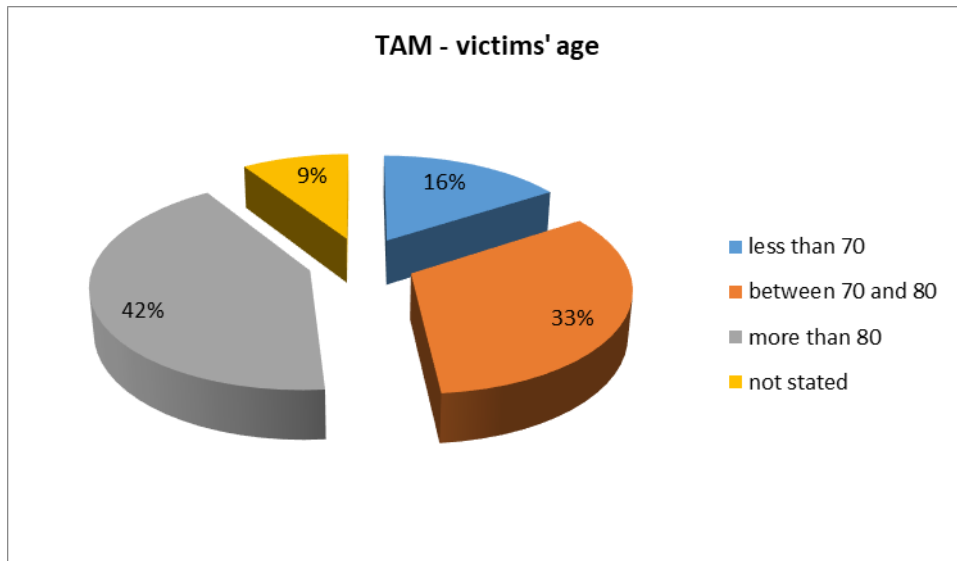
As a confirmation to what has been said, within the great majority of reported cases, the abusers are the same family members and, in the specific, sons and daughters - often reported by the same victims (parents)...



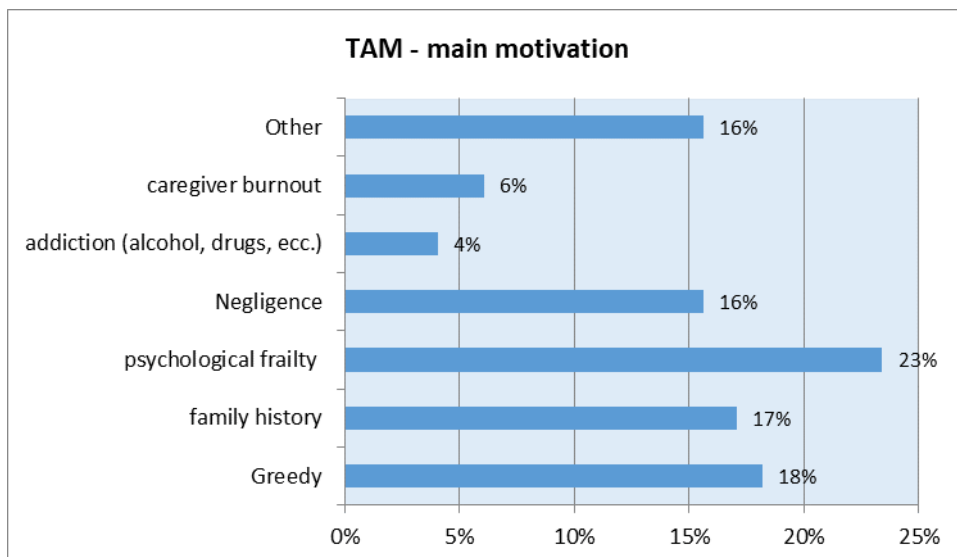
...- that abuse widow mothers, aged 70 and more.



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Now, this is the frame for the 304 dossiers opened between July 2011 and December 2016. It's necessary to point out though, that – following the check and control phase by the T.A.M. co-ordinator and referees – not every dossier was reporting a real abuse. In any case the figure focuses on the fact that several situations exist where – although a proper abuse cannot be verified – mistreatment and discomfort are all the same experienced / felt by the elderly. And the psychological frailty is a key factor both on the side of the elderly abused or, alternatively, on the abusers side, even if a situation cannot be labelled as a proper abuse.





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Finally, most of the calls received and of the dossiers opened relate to abuses at home. What can't still come to the surface are abuses perpetrated within care/nursing homes. The rare reports are often withdrawn by reporters, under fear of blackmailing. As a consequence, it's impossible for us to verify the situation and to propose a solution.

This issue is instead of enormous importance and the topic should be raised within the Public Institutions in charge of regulating the social care service. The sense of great frailty and dependency felt by people living in care homes often turn to a sense of abuse in front of non-professional behaviour by care-givers, nurses ect. But often the abusing attitude is far from being intentional, being instead the result of bad training or lack of personnel. Until now T.A.M. hasn't been much effective in raising enough attention on such a delicate matter. Care homes are essential in social contexts where the elderly population is constantly growing and where, as a consequence, the dependency issue is gaining more and more importance within the older, often accompanied by social emergency. Notwithstanding the dignity is a fundamental right and therefore a priority that has to be guaranteed with every means at disposal. One of these means is the assurance that assistance services are delivered with the highest competence and quality.