



Health
South Eastern Sydney
Local Health District



Sending out the SOS

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Introduction to the Southcare Outreach Service (SOS)

- We are a rapid response community service providing a coordinated multi-disciplinary approach to aged care clients in the Sutherland Shire - Sydney
- The purpose of the service is to prevent unnecessary ED presentations
- We are presenting an elder abuse case study which required the resources of NSW Ambulance, NSW Police and the SOS
- This is a case of severe neglect, domestic squalor and abuse



Wife's bed ↓



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The referral...

- SOS office receives phone call from local Extended Care Paramedic (ECP)
- NSW Ambulance service had been called to attend a house in Cronulla by the Sheriff
- Sheriff was there to evict client (Mr C), client's wife (Mrs C), daughter and son due to unpaid rent and squalor
- On arrival the sheriff found a bed-bound elderly gentleman by himself on continuous oxygen and encased by squalor.



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Sending out the SOS...

Clinical Nurse Consultants attended the property

- Mr C stated he had not been out of bed for “about 6 months”
- Was brought out of property in partially zipped body bag



- Mr C was extremely soiled, covered in fleas, flies and he had head lice
- Observations within normal limits and no acute medical issues identified other than evidence of severe neglect and malnutrition



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THE HOME

- Severe squalor & hoarding - rotting food, human faeces, urine and cat faeces
- And then there was the **STENCH!**



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The concern

• Where was Mrs C????????

- Information obtained from Mr C and from hospital records indicated she had a significant dementia
- Property caretaker told SOS that Mrs C did not walk, looked to be in poor condition and called out all the time
- Property caretaker also indicated son and daughter had been living in a car (unregistered) outside the property due to the condition of the house



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So we were dealing with...

- Clear evidence of neglect of two vulnerable elderly individuals
- Suspected financial abuse
- Missing elderly lady with probable dementia whose physical condition was unclear



Guardianship hearing

- Urgent phone hearing
- Children contacted by NCAT but would not reveal their location (except “in the car”) or the location of Mrs C (muffled noises in b/g)
- Public guardian appointed for both Mr & Mrs C with **coercive** powers for 12 months



But there was a problem....

- We didn't know where Mrs C was
- The police do not have powers to actively search for her



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Role of the Police and current gaps

- There is no specific legislation governing Elder Abuse and NSW Police
- In this situation, despite having a Guardianship order in place with coercive powers, Police did not have the authority to **actively search** for Mrs C
- Contrast this with NSW Police roles and powers in relation to young persons under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* where specific powers are given to remove children without consent or a court/tribunal order.



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Mrs C located

- Brought into ED by Daughter & Son

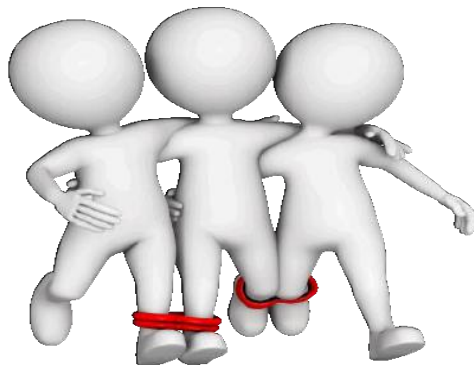
Nursing

Confused of time and place...unkempt and malodorous...had to be washed head to toe, dirt brown in colour, possible faecal matter...looked like patient had remained in same pad for extended amount of time with dry and wet faecal matter... flea bites on the buttocks and genitals



Outcome

Despite the legal limitations around elder abuse the SOS team with assistance from NSW Police were able to achieve a safe and positive outcome for two elderly individuals experiencing significant Elder Abuse by placing them into a Residential Aged Care Facility



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Questions?



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