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**Early Diagnosis For Dementia Can
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**Recognize The Signs Of Elder
Financial Abuse**



Elder financial abuse is all too common and can take many forms. Sadly, most perpetrators of financial abuse are not strangers. The National Center on Elder Abuse reports 90 percent of perpetrators are people the victims know well. To help you or someone you know guard against financial abuse, it's important to know the warning signs.

Lack of knowledge about major financial issues

One red flag is when an older person who was previously engaged and sharp begins to show a significant lack of recall about important matters. This isn't the usual type of lapse like "I don't know where I put my keys" that happens to all of us. It's more like when a retiree whose signature is on a bank withdrawal slip for a large amount later says, "I don't recall taking that money out of the bank."

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Someone you love such as your parent or your spouse shows signs of dementia. You're worried it could be Alzheimer's or some other form of dementia, but because you know that nothing can be done, you keep quiet, hoping you're wrong.

Yet discovering dementia early can be helpful for several reasons:

- ♦ You can reverse some cognitive problems that mimic dementia, such as depression or a vitamin B12 deficiency.
- ♦ Although there is no cure, Alzheimer's medications can temporarily slow symptoms, improve quality of life and prolong independence, which also helps the patient's caregivers.
- ♦ Government or nonprofit agencies can provide support for the patient and caregiver. Services might include financial help and emotional counseling for both the patient and caregiver.
- ♦ The individual with dementia can have conversations with loved ones about what kind of treatment they want. They can fill out financial, legal and health advance directives before losing the ability to communicate. If these conversations are put off too long, family members may have to go to court to take control of their loved one's affairs which is a costly and difficult process.

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The finances of the retiree should be immediately examined and more closely monitored on an ongoing basis to safeguard the person's assets.

Isolation

If no relatives live nearby and no friends regularly check in, it's easy for strangers to step in and befriend an elderly person for financial gain. Pay close attention to new friendships or relationships made.

Questionable behavior of relatives

People who financially exploit the elderly come from all backgrounds and walks of life, yet many financial abusers fit a profile.

According to a recent study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, perpetrators are most likely to be adult children or spouses, and they are more likely to be male, to have a history of past or current substance abuse, to have mental or physical health problems, to have a history of trouble with the police, to be socially isolated, to be unemployed or have financial problems, and to be experiencing major stress.

Self-serving family members might even convince an elderly person to transfer funds from the accounts, make excessive withdrawals or make other transactions that sap the person's finances. So if a relative who's looking after an elderly person makes a sudden change in lifestyle, such as suddenly quitting their job, make sure that change of lifestyle isn't being subsidized by the elderly person in the home.

What to do

If you suspect elder financial abuse, don't hesitate to confront the perpetrator and get the proper authorities involved. Theft should be reported to law enforcement officials, and there are local and state social service agencies in every state to help elderly victims of financial abuse. †

Source: *AARP* website

Contact Marcia if you have any questions. †

Early Diagnosis For Dementia Can Be Helpful ... *continued from page 1*



To help your loved one and yourself, watch for indications of dementia. Dementia is a collective term, not a disease, that describes various symptoms of cognitive decline, such as memory loss. Alzheimer's is the most common type of dementia, accounting for 60 to 80 percent of cases.

Memory loss. As we age, it is common to not remember as well as we once did, but those with dementia forget the names of people close to them or major life events. They may ask repeatedly for information or tell the same story over and over.

Lapse in judgment. Those with dementia can forget what is appropriate, so they may barge into someone else's house or apartment without knocking. Commonly, they lose inhibitions about sexual behavior, such as making inappropriate comments or exposing themselves.

Difficulty with language. The person uses the wrong word for something familiar, such as calling a garbage can a coffee maker. They might refer to the post office as "that place you take the mail" or they can't find the word at all, so they stop joining the conversation or trail off in the middle of talking. Similarly, they have a harder time comprehending conversations and may need to have something explained repeatedly before they understand. †

Source: *Society of Certified Senior Advisors*