June is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and is an important time for making sure the seniors in your life are being cared for properly. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around one in six people over the age of 60 have experienced some kind of abuse in the last year. What’s more, this statistic is thought to under-represent the situation, as those who experience abuse often don’t report it.

Most commonly, elder abuse occurs in medical institutions such as care homes and hospitals. Abuse in such cases can be defined as any instance in which the care worker deprives the patient of dignity and care, such as leaving them in soiled clothes, neglecting their emotional needs or intentionally withholding necessary care. According to the WHO, two in three workers in long-term care facilities admitted to committing some form of elder abuse in the past year.

Elder abuse also happens in community settings, such as when an elderly person lives alone or with a family member. In these cases, elders have an increased risk of social isolation and mistreatment from the people around them as they lose their health and mobility. Financial abuse is also common, as friends, relatives and community members are more likely than strangers to take property or money from seniors.

Elder abuse is everyone’s responsibility, and it’s important to report what you see to authorities and family members. Be sure to know the risks and to check in with your elderly relatives, friends and neighbours regularly to ensure that they’re getting the care and respect they deserve.

**ELDER ABUSE: it happens more than you think**

Debunking myths around elder abuse to better prevent it

To celebrate World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (held annually on June 15), numerous organizations come together to denounce the widespread abuse inflicted on the elderly and inform the general public on ways to help put an end to this alarming problem.

But first, in order to better recognize and prevent abusive behaviours committed against our seniors, we must debunk certain myths that unfortunately remain well rooted in popular belief. Here are four:

1. Abusive acts against the elderly are often committed by strangers. In reality, abusive behaviour is more often committed by close relatives like family members, spouses, children or friends.

2. Victims of elder abuse often report violent incidents. The elderly are frequently torn between the affection they harbour for the abuser and the need to report cruel incidents that they experience. Sometimes, they may be dependent on the individual who is mistreating them, while other times they may simply be unaware that they’re the victims of abuse.

3. The elderly are incapable of making the right choices, especially informed financial decisions. The majority of seniors are more than capable of adequately managing their expenses and personal business. Their cognitive abilities don’t actually degrade as much as people may think, unless they have a specific illness.

4. Seniors who receive higher incomes are more at risk of experiencing abuse. Any elder can be the victim of abusive behaviour, regardless of social status or financial standing.