



How to Catch Resident-to-Resident Aggression Before It's Too Late

By Susan Saldibar

I recently read an article in the Minnesota Star Tribune that was a real eye opener. It was part of a 3-part series on elder abuse in assisted living communities. The article was called [“When Roommates Are the Abusers”](#). What a topic!

Resident-on-resident violence is an area of abuse that seems to be getting more attention these days. I've read a couple articles, just over the last few weeks. And it's more prevalent than many like to believe. According to a Cornell University study, in New York alone, one in five nursing home residents are involved in a minimum of one aggressive encounter from a fellow resident.

How does this happen in an environment where residents are supposedly watched over 24/7?

I asked Jacquie Brennan, Vice President of [Vigil Health Solutions](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner) about the rise in resident aggression. I know, from previous conversations, that Vigil's resident monitoring systems are being used to help detect resident aggression before it results in injury.

The problem, according to Jacquie, is that these incidents often happen in the middle of the night and can, therefore, go unnoticed by staff who may have already made their rounds. “If a particularly vulnerable resident is injured by another resident, he or she may not be able to call for help,” says Jacquie. “So the event could go unnoticed until the next ‘bed check’ or nurse’s rounds occur. And that could be the next morning, leaving a resident alone for hours,” she adds.

And sometimes the violence occurs between roommates!

A [report](#) published in JAMDA, the Journal of American Medical Doctors Association, referenced a study of roommate violence in nursing homes, conducted by Eilon Caspi, BSW, MA, PhD.

Here are a few of the findings regarding roommate incidents:

- 81% occurred during evening hours.
- 70% were not witnessed by staff (even with hallway surveillance cameras).
- 62% occurred on weekends.
- 37% occurred between roommates.

These kinds of incidents have played a big part in Vigil's development of innovative Integrated Care Management systems. These systems use a combination of sensor technology and sophisticated software algorithms to detect potentially unsafe behavior and alert staff in senior living communities --- and here's the key --- before an incident can happen.

You do have options!

Jacque shared with me some of the options available with the Vigil solutions:

- Setting customizable "rules" to immediately alert when a newly admitted resident gets out of bed at night so that they can witness the resident's behaviors when awake, but without having to dedicate staffing resources to 24/7 monitoring.
- Turning on the "Room Departed" rule so that staff are aware when a resident they are concerned about leaves their room.
- Setting the "Room Entered" rule to alert staff that someone has entered another resident's room, so that they can intervene.
- Alerting staff when residents in a shared room are out of bed in the night.

The ability to alert staff to incidents before, during or at least immediately after they occur has never been more critical. The article pointed out that there is potential for these incidents to increase as long-term care providers open their doors to more short-term stay residents. These residents can be stronger and more mobile than traditional long-term care residents. They are, therefore, in a better position to prey off more vulnerable long-term care residents.

No community wants to be in the headlines for resident abuse. In addition to the unspeakable damage caused to residents and their families it has already spelled disaster for hundreds of nursing homes and assisted living communities. Who will be next?



This article has been brought to you by [Vigil Health Solutions](#) in partnership with [Senior Housing Forum](#).

