

# Characterizing Aging-In-Place Conflicts Experienced by Older Adults

**Alaine Murawski, LSW, AM,** Marianne Tschoe, MD, Amber Miller-Winder, MPH, Allison Schierer, BS, Raven Relerford, BS, Vanessa Ramirez-Zohfeld, MPH, Lee A. Lindquist, MD MPH MBA<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Division of Geriatrics, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine; Chicago, Illinois

## INTRODUCTION

Older adults often are faced with making decisions about aging-in-place (AIP) as their health changes. These decisions may create conflicts with others, causing stress, frustration, and anxiety. We sought to characterize the conflicts that older adults experience about AIP.

## METHODS

As part of a study on decision making about AIP versus moving into long term care communities, we are longitudinally following a cohort of older adults with surveys every 6 months. Subjects are asked to describe any conflicts that have occurred about their living situation. Responses were coded using constant comparative analysis examining type, content, and whether statements were interests, rights, or power-based.

## RESULTS

We enrolled 293 subjects (Table 1).

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics (By Time Point)

Variable	Baseline N=293
Age, M (SD)	73.5 (5.0)
Sex, %	
Male	27.3
Female	72.7
Race %	
Black	29.1
White	59.6
Other	11.3
Education, %	
HS or less	14.7
Some College	18.5
College Graduate	21.9
Graduate Degree	44.9
Income, %	
< \$10,000	4.6
\$10,000-\$24,999	13.9
\$25,000-49,999	24.9
>= \$50,000	56.6
Employment Status, %	
Working for Pay	28.3
Retired/Unemployed	71.7
Marital Status, %	
Married	47.3
Unmarried/Widowed	52.7

## Conflicts about aging-in-place (AIP) occur frequently among older adults (e.g., interpersonal, task, and value-based).

### Thematic analysis of conflict content revealed categories:

Location Change	<i>We have conflicts about when to get out of here and where to go... my wife wants to get out of this house sooner than later.</i>
Home Maintenance	<i>My son insisted I put in a new lower tub, and I didn't want to.</i>
Different Ways of Task Completion	<i>It is about my children and the way we do things, I don't take my time, and I don't eat the same stuff.</i>
Safety	<i>The crime rate is too high in Chicago. Neighbor kicked in the door and destroyed our property.</i>
Health-related	<i>Having a homecare helper give me assistance.</i>
Financial	<i>The rent is too high. I had to pay more money than my daughter and it was becoming too much.</i>

## RESULTS, CONT.

- 124 conflicts were reported over 18 months.
- Thematic analysis revealed 3 types of conflicts:
  1. Interpersonal (subcategories: spouse, intergeneration, other)
  2. Task
  3. Value-based

Content were coded into 6 themes: **Location change** (e.g. my sister says I can be incapacitated and she said I should live in senior housing), **Home maintenance issues** (e.g., my son insisted I put in a new lower tub and I didn't want to), **Different ways of completing tasks** (e.g., it is about my children and the way we do things, I don't take my time, and I don't eat the same stuff), **Safety** (e.g., Neighbor's boyfriend kicked in the door and destroyed our property), **Financial** (e.g. I discovered that my spouse secretly met his attorney and changed his will so I would get nothing), and **Health-related** (e.g., the family next door is always having bonfires which messes with my asthma. we've argued). Most statements were interests or rights-based.

## CONCLUSION

Older adults experience a wide range of conflicts pertaining to AIP decision making. Most often older adults experience interpersonal conflicts with supporters about moving from their home or adapting the home for their needs. Training in dispute resolution may help alleviate these conflicts between older adults and their supporters.

## FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

This study is funded through National Institutes of Health's National Institute on Aging, Grant Number R01A05877 (PI: Lindquist) . Dr. Lindquist is also supported, in part, by the R01AG068421 and Northwestern Pepper Center P30AG059988.

## CONTACT US

[Alaine.Murawski@northwestern.edu](mailto:Alaine.Murawski@northwestern.edu) - Murawski

[LAL425@northwestern.edu](mailto:LAL425@northwestern.edu) - Lindquist

Twitter: @LeeLindquistMD