

SURVEY: MORE THAN 4 OUT OF 5 EXPERTS SAY FINANCIAL ABUSE OF ELDERLY IS GETTING WORSE

IPT Reports 3,000 Health Professionals to Spot and Report Dementia-Linked Cases of Investment Fraud/Financial Exploitation; Questions Posed of Over 760 Securities Regulators, Adult Protective Services Workers, Medical Professionals, Law Enforcement Officials and Others on “Front Lines”.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – June 13, 2012 – The vast majority (84 percent) of 762 experts dealing with investment fraud/financial exploitation of American senior citizens agree that the problem of swindles targeting the elderly is getting worse today, according to the findings of a major new online survey released today by the nonprofit Investor Protection Trust (IPT).

Another key finding: Nearly all of the respondents (99 percent) say that older Americans are “very vulnerable” (75 percent) or “somewhat vulnerable” (24 percent) to financial swindles.

Released just two days ahead of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on Friday and one day before a major White House event addressing elder abuse and financial exploitation, the poll comes as IPT reports that it has held 43 continuing medical education (CME) events across the U.S. to train nearly 3,000 doctors and other medical professionals as part of its Elder Investment Fraud and Financial Exploitation (EIFFE) Prevention Program. The groundbreaking EIFFE Prevention Program educates medical professionals about how to spot older Americans who may be particularly vulnerable to investment fraud abuse and then to refer these at-risk patients to state securities regulators and Adult Protective Services (APS) professionals.

Other major IPT survey findings include the following:

- Nearly three out of four respondents (58 percent) deal with elderly victims of investment fraud/financial exploitation “quite often” or “somewhat often.” Fewer than one in 10 (7 percent) say they never deal with such victims.
- Nearly all of the experts (96 percent) say the problem of elderly investment fraud/financial exploitation in the U.S. is “very serious” (70 percent) or “somewhat serious (26 percent).
- More than nine out 10 respondents (93 percent) indicate that medical professionals can play a “very” or “somewhat” important role “when they are trained to spot and report the warning signs of elderly investment fraud/financial exploitation.”

Don Blandin, president and CEO, Investor Protection Trust, said: **“The message from those on the front lines of investor protection is clear: Swindles targeting older Americans are a bigger problem today than ever before. That’s why we have already trained 3,000 U.S. medical professionals who deal everyday with older Americans to spot the impaired mental capacity that can leave seniors vulnerable to financial abuse. We want to head off financial swindles before the damage is done.”**

Robert Lam, chairman of both the Investor Protection Institute and the Pennsylvania Securities Commission, said: **“We need to recognize that there is a medical component to elderly investment fraud that cannot be addressed solely by regulators. As state agencies, we need to combine our efforts with the unique front-line perspective of doctors, APS and other professionals to get help to victims, and those most at risk of becoming victims, at the earliest possible point. Together, we can do an even better job of protecting our seniors and their money.”**

Kathleen Quinn, executive director, National Adult Protective Services Association, said: **“Adult Protective Services professionals are the ‘first responders’ to elder financial abuse, so we see the devastation these crimes wreak in older persons’ lives every day. That is why we are part of this**

major national campaign to end rampant elder financial exploitation and to protect and help vulnerable older victims.”

Dr. Robert Roush, director, Texas Consortium Geriatric Education Center, Huffington Center on Aging, Baylor College of Medicine, said: **“That financial abuse of older Americans is rampant today is no commentary on seniors and their judgment; it is a simple medical fact of life that many older adults are highly vulnerable to being financially exploited. And knowing that there are medical conditions that increase the likelihood of success for investment swindles targeting older Americans makes enlisting their health care professionals to help spot their vulnerability to financial abuse the right thing to do. State securities agencies deserve credit for being able to think outside of the box and take an important new tack in reducing the scourge of elder investment scams. Working together, clinicians and investor educators can make a difference.”**

Senior citizens have long been the target of unscrupulous investment scam artists. According to the 2010 Investor Protection Trust (IPT) Elder Fraud Survey, more than seven million older Americans – one out of every five citizens over the age of 65 – already have been victimized by a financial swindle. For more information about that earlier IPT survey, go to <http://www.investorprotection.org/learn/research/?fa=eiffeSurvey> on the Web.

The Investor Protection Trust launched the Elder Investment Fraud and Financial Exploitation Prevention Program in 2010. Starting with a grant from the Investor Protection Trust in 2008, the Huffington Center on Aging at Baylor College of Medicine and the Texas Consortium Geriatric Education Center developed a program called the Elder Investment Fraud and Financial Exploitation Prevention Program. In 2009, the TCGEC and its affiliates in nine locations in Texas conducted a series of 10 pilot continuing medical education programs throughout the state.

Based on the results of the Texas pilot project, the IPT secured the participation of state securities offices in a total of now 28 states and jurisdictions to form a coalition to prevent EIFFE. The 28 participating states and other jurisdictions are: Alabama; California; Colorado; Connecticut; Delaware; District of Columbia; Georgia; Idaho; Illinois; Indiana; Iowa; Kentucky; Maine; Michigan; Minnesota; Nebraska; North Carolina; New Jersey; New Mexico; Oklahoma; Oregon; Pennsylvania; Puerto Rico; Tennessee; Utah; Vermont; Washington and West Virginia.

To date, a total of 43 CME events have been held in 24 states and the District of Columbia. The total number of medical professionals that have been educated to date is 2,838. That number will top the 3,000 mark on June 16, 2012 when an additional 170 medical professionals are trained at an EIFFE Prevention Program CME event in Nashville, TN.

OTHER KEY POLL FINDINGS

- According to the experts, the top three reasons why elderly investment frauds go unreported are: “shame on the part of victims” (86 percent); “the ability of con artists to string victims along until it is too late” (80 percent); and “failure of adult children to spot the problem and intervene” (70 percent).
- 96 percent of respondents say that “potential problems with mental comprehension make seniors more vulnerable” to financial swindles “very often” or “quite often.”
- 80 percent of respondents say that their experience is “very” or “somewhat” consistent with “a 2008 study (that) found that about 35 percent of the 25 million people over age 71 in the U.S. either have mild cognitive impairment or Alzheimer’s disease, making them especially vulnerable to financial exploitation, including investment fraud.”

Available online at <http://www.investorprotection.org>, the new IPT survey was conducted during the first 10 days of June 2012. Those surveyed include state securities regulators (76), financial planners (77 percent), medical professionals (24), caregiver/social workers (93), APS workers (172), educators (56) and others (264, including other law enforcement officials and legal experts).

ABOUT IPT AND IPI

The Investor Protection Trust (<http://www.investorprotection.org>) is a nonprofit organization devoted to investor education. The primary mission of IPT is to provide independent, objective information needed by consumers to make informed investment decisions. Founded in 1993 as part of a multi-state settlement to resolve charges of misconduct, IPT serves as an independent source of unbiased and non-commercial investor education materials. IPT operates programs under its own auspices and uses grants to underwrite important investor education and protection initiatives carried out by other organizations. The IPT provides investor education at both the state and national levels.

The Investor Protection Institute (<http://www.protectinvestors.org>) is an independent nonprofit organization that advances investor protection by conducting and supporting unbiased research and groundbreaking education programs. IPI carries out its mission through investor education, protection and research programs delivered at both the national and grassroots level in collaboration with state securities regulators and other strategic partners. IPI is dedicated to providing innovative investor protection programs that will make a meaningful difference in the financial lives of Americans in all walks of life and at all levels of sophistication about financial matters.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: A streaming audio recording of the news event will be available on June 13, 2012 by 3 p.m. EDT at <http://www.investorprotection.org>.