

Aging Population



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KEYWORDS

- Older adult • Individualized aging • Complexity of care
- Physiologic changes with aging • ACES • Transitions • Pain management
- End of life

KEY POINTS

- Individualized aging is the process of aging from an individual perspective.
- It is important for frontline nurses to prevent hospital-acquired events by following best practice policies and providing evidence-based safe, quality, and accountable care to prevent complications during hospitalization.
- FANCAPES (fluids, nutrition, communication, activity, pain, elimination, mental status) is a comprehensive physical assessment tool to determine the basic needs and functional needs in an acutely ill, medically complex older adult.
- Frontline nurses need to focus on the assessment of function and how the chronic illness affects the quality of care for the older adult and the masking of acute illness.
- Individuals at high risk for vulnerability during transitions are older people with multiple conditions, depression, or other mental health disorders, isolated elders without family or friends, non-English-speaking individuals, immigrants, and low-income patients.
- Frontline nurses must be able to incorporate both the physiologic changes and the American Nurses Association's standards for the older adult into professional practice to provide quality, safe care.
- Frontline nurses are responsible for the assessment, treatment, and documentation of pain in all patients.
- Dying is an individual process. How one approaches the experience is a reflection of the way one has lived his or her life and responded to other losses, circumstances, and culture.
- There is a lack of discussion about palliative care and hospice.

INTRODUCTION

By 2050, 1 in 5 Americans will be more than 65 years of age, with those older than 85 years showing the greatest increase in numbers. The number of people living to

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100 years of age is projected to grow at more than 20 times the rate of the total population by 2050.¹ Frontline nurses are being called on to incorporate specific gerontological skills in order to meet the needs of the rapidly growing aging population (those aged 65 years and older). The aging population requires that nurses respond to the emerging issues in the health of older adults. These issues include coordination of care, helping older adults manage their own care, establishing quality measures, identifying minimum levels of training for people who care for older adults, and researching and analyzing appropriate training to equip providers with the tools they need to meet the needs of older adults.²

The current health care culture must change in order to respond to the aging population. Baby boomers in the United States may bring significant changes to how this country's health care system functions as a result of their past experiences. This generation of older adults is expected to have better health and, therefore, will live longer and be better educated, more connected to society, and more personally involved in health care decisions than any previous group.³

It is the responsibility of the nurse to assist the geriatric population to achieve the highest level of wellness in relation to whatever situation exists. Frontline nurses can, through knowledge and affirmation, empower, enhance, and support the person's movement to the highest level of wellness and quality of life possible.¹ The nurse can use several resources to assist in individualized care, the complexity of care for the elderly, and the issues of transitions of care. Healthy People 2020, Advancing Care Excellence for Seniors (ACES), and Clinical Preventive Services Guidelines are all excellent resources for frontline nurses.⁴

Healthy People 2020 has identified emerging issues in the health of older adults. The issues include

- Coordinate care
- Help older adults manage their own care
- Establish quality measures
- Identify minimum levels of training for people who care for older adults
- Research and analyze appropriate training to equip providers with the tools they need to meet the needs of older adults²

In 2007, the National League for Nursing in collaboration with the Community College of Philadelphia and funded by the Independence Foundation, the John A. Hartford Foundation, and Laerdal Medical embarked on efforts to improve on gerontological nursing education and research.³ The project that emerged, ACES, is designed to enhance and improve gerontological nursing at the bedside. The ACES framework identifies 3 unique concepts integral to delivering high-quality care: individualized aging, complexity of care, and vulnerability during transitions.³

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE DOMAINS

Individualized Aging

Individualized aging is the process of aging from an individual perspective.³ The older adult has a unique background and health history. Frontline nurses need to recognize that stereotype characteristics do not apply to all older adults. For example, an 85 year old may have a biological age of 65 years because the older adult maintained a healthy lifestyle and remained active. Frontline nurses need to conduct a comprehensive assessment to determine the older adult's personal meaning of aging, their specific physiologic changes to aging, and how aging has impacted their activities of daily

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