

Gerontological Nursing

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- Contemporary View of the Elderly
 - Positivism rather than prejudice
 - Intelligence rather than myth
 - Concern rather than neglect

- Positive views throughout history
- Negative views throughout history
- Federal Old Age Insurance Law under the Social Security Act in 1935

Growth of the Older Population

- Persons over 65 years represent more than 12% of the population in the United States.
 - Over 35 M persons exceed 65 years
- Life Expectancy
 - 1930: 59.7 years
 - 1965: 70.2 years
 - Present 77.1 years

- Unique subsets of elderly
- Young-Old: 65 to 75 years
- Middle Old: 75 to 85 years
- Old-Old: 85 to 100 years
- Elite Old (centenarians): over 100 years old

- Persons older than 65 years of age represent more than 12% of the population in the United States
- 17% of population older than 65 y/o by 2020

- Factors Influencing Increased Life Expectancy
 - Advancements in disease control and health technology
 - Greater survival rate
 - Improved sanitation and living conditions

- Race and Gender Differences
- 1980's to Present
 - Wider gap in life expectancy between white and black people
 - Black life expectancy declined due to homicides/HIV/AIDS
- 20th Century
 - Ratio of men to women steadily declined to fewer than 7 men to women
 - Trend is changing, ratio of men to women increasing

- Geographic Breakdown of Older Populations
- Greatest numbers of older populations :
 - California, New York, Florida, PA and Texas
- States with the most dramatic increases
 - Nevada, Alaska, Hawaii and Arizona
- States with the lowest percentage of total population over age 65 years
 - Alaska, Utah and Georgia

- Income analysis of Older Populations
- <10% fall below poverty level
- Elderly possess financial problems
 - SS makes up more than ½ of their income
 - Many are asset rich and cash poor
- Women and minority groups are poorer than white men

- Education of the OA
 - More educated
 - Increased number completing high school since the 1940's
 - More OA with advanced degrees
 - These individuals have higher incomes
 - More informed health care consumers

- Health status of Older Populations
 - Fewer acute illnesses
 - Chronic Illness is a major problem
 - Higher rates of hospitalization, surgery and physician visits exists
 - 1:4 OA will spend sometime in a nursing home

- Impact of The Baby Boomers
 - Most have children but low birth rate means fewer children to assist them in old age
 - Best educated generation ever
 - Their income tends to be higher
 - Leisure time is scarcer ; they are more likely to feel stressed
 - They exercise more frequently than other adults

- Predictions For Baby Boomers Healthcare
 - They have a highly active role in health care
 - Their ability to access information will keep them informed
 - They will not be satisfied with the condition of today's nursing homes
 - Their blended families will need special assistance with care-giving demands

- Economic Impact of Growing Elderly Population
 - Increase in demand
 - Ongoing ability of the government to provide services
 - Concern that elderly are using a disproportionate amount of tax dollars and that limits should be set

- Role of the Gerontological Nurse in Protecting the Older Population
 - Active involvement in decisions pertaining to the rationing of services
 - Assumption of leadership in developing cost effective methods of care delivery that do not compromise the quality of services to older adults

Chapter 2

- Theories of Aging
 - Research focused
 - Promote aging in a healthier fashion and postpone negative consequences of aging
 - Keep people healthy and active longer rather than extending a state of long term disability
 - Understand the factors that influence the health and well being of people of all ages

- No two individuals age identically
- Also the rate of aging within different body systems vary
- One system can show marked decline while another demonstrates no significant change

- Biological Theories of Aging
 - Genetic programming
 - Error Theory
 - Cross Linking
 - Free Radicals
 - Autoimmune Reactions
 - Wear and Tear Theories

- Genetic – people inherit a genetic program that determines their specific life expectancy
- Supports the theory of senescence – the process of becoming old ---is under genetic control
- Error theory- genetic mutations are responsible for aging by causing organ decline

- Cross-linking Theory- cellular division is threatened as a result of radiation or a chemical reaction in which cross-linking agents attaches to DNA and prevents mitosis
- Evolution theories- relate aging to evolution
- Free Radicals – are highly reactive molecules that can damage DNA which contains biological information and creates genetic disorder

- Lipofuscin – age pigments (a lipoprotein)
- As lipofuscin increases life span decreases
- Autoimmune Theory – primary organs of the immune system , thymus and bone marrow, are believed to be affected by the aging process

- Wear and tear theory – repeated use and injury of the body over time
- Perform a highly specialized function
- As we age they become less efficient

- Aging Theories

- Other biological factors affecting the aging process

- Stress- has an adverse effect and leads to gastric ulcers
 - Disease- Obesity is shown to increase the risk of many diseases and shortens life
 - Environment Factors – threaten health
 - Neuroendocrines and Neurochemicals

- Radiation
- Nutrients
- Environment

Biological Theories on Aging

- Genetic Programming
 - People inherit a genetic program that determines their specific life expectancy
- Error Theory
 - Genetic mutations cause aging and organ decline as a result of cellular mutations
- Cross Linking
 - Cellular division is threatened as a result of radiation or a chemical reaction

Biological Theories on Aging

- Free radicals
 - Highly reactive molecules generated from oxygen metabolism damage DNA
- Autoimmune reactions
 - The thymus and bone marrow are affected by the aging process
- Wear and tear theories
 - Repeated use and injury of the body over time causes aging

- Psychosocial Aging Theories
 - Disengagement Theory
 - Society and the individual gradually withdraw from each other
 - Activity Theory
 - Adults continue a middle aged life style denying the existence of old age as long as possible
 - Continuity Theory
 - Relates personality and predisposition towards certain actions in old age to similar factors during other phases of the life cycle

– Developmental Tasks

- The process of healthy psychological aging is the result of the successful fulfillment of developmental tasks

– Gerotranscendence

- Aging entails a transition from a rational materialistic perspective to a cosmic vision. Recent theory basically implies as people age less concerned with material possessions, meaningless relationships, and self-interests and desire a life of more significance and a greater connection with others

- Nursing Implications

- Identify factors that contribute to healthy aging and assist aging individuals in promoting a healthy aging process
- Be sensitive to the impact your own attitudes toward aging can have on patients
- Promote joy and a sense of purpose in the elderly

Factors contributing to a long and healthy life

- Diet
- Activity
- Play and Laughter
- Faith
- Empowerment
- Stress Management
- P. 21 Box 2-2

Chapter 3

- Diversity
 - By 2020 one quarter of America's older population will belong to a minority racial or ethnic group

Chapter 3

- Characteristics shared by ethnic groups
 - History
 - Language
 - Customs
 - Beliefs

- Factors Influenced by Ethnic Norms
- Diet
- Response to pain
- Compliance with self-care activities and medical treatments
- Trust in health care providers

- Hispanic Cultural Aspects
 - Hold older relatives in high esteem
 - Old age is viewed as a positive time
 - Expect children to take care of them; avoid institutions
 - English may be a second language
 - Illness may revive the native tongue

Hispanic Americans: Statistics

- Now represent approximately 6% of the older population in the United States
- Mexican population totals more than 8 million plus an estimated 3 to 5 million illegal immigrants; the majority reside in California and Texas
- Puerto Rican immigration, reverse immigration, occurred in the 1970's. Estimated 1 million live in NYC

- Cuban immigrants are recent newcomers to America
- 25% reside in Florida with other large groups in New York and New Jersey
- Among all Hispanics, Cuban people are the most highly educated and have the highest earnings

- Hispanic people view states of health and illness as the actions of God
- Page 25
- Hispanic people hold older relatives in high esteem. Old age is viewed as a positive time. Expect that children will take care of them and avoid institutionalization

- Characteristics of the Black Elderly
 - Health problems accumulate over time
 - Hold health beliefs that may be unconventional
 - Look to family members for decision making care
 - May have a degree of caution in interacting with and using health services as a defense against prejudice

Assessment

- Black skin color result of high melanin
- To diagnose cyanosis examine
 - Nailbeds, palms, soles, gums and under the tongue
- The absence of a red tone or glow to skin can indicate pallor
- Petechiae are best detected on the conjunctiva, abdomen, and buccal mucosa

- A higher prevalence of disease in black population includes:
 - Heart Disease
 - Cancer
 - Diabetes
 - HIV/AIDS- 3rd leading cause of death

- Chinese Americans Medical Traditions
 - Care of body and health are important
 - Chinese medicine based on balance of yin-yang
 - Use senses for assessing medical problems rather than machinery
 - Herbs, acupressure ; acupuncture preferred
 - Inappropriate for male physician to touch female

- Chinese attitudes towards elderly
- Achieving old age is a blessing
 - Elderly held in high esteem, respected, and sought for advise
- The family unit is expected to take care of its elder members
 - May be reluctant to use service agencies for the elderly

- Japanese American Culture
 - Preserve many of their traditions
 - Feel a close bond to one another
 - Highly value the family
 - Traditional health practices vs. technology
 - May not express their feelings openly or challenge the health professional

Generations of Japanese Americans

- Issei – 1st generation
- Nisei – 2nd generation
- Sansei – 3rd generation
- Yonsei – 4th generation

- Jewish Religious Traditions
 - Sabbath is observed from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday
 - Non-emergency medical procedures may be refused during that time
 - Many believe that the head and feet should always be covered; some oppose shaving
 - Diet excludes pork and shellfish; prohibit milk and meat at the same meal. Fasting occurs on holy days.

- Jewish Medical Practices
 - Modern medical care is encouraged
 - May want to consult rabbi re: organ transplants and life sustaining measures
 - Certain rituals may be practiced at death
 - Washing and sitting with the body
 - Opposing autopsy

- Statistics for Native American Population
 - Less than half live on reservations
 - The Indian Health Service provides free universal access to healthcare to Native Americans who live on reservations
 - More than half live in urban areas and healthcare is inferior to those who live on reservations
 - There are >250 different N.A. languages
 - English is listed as the first language

- Common Native American Medical TX.
 - Use of spiritual rituals for healing
 - Use of medicine men
 - Use of herbs and homemade drugs and mechanical interventions to treat illness

- Native Americans
 - Close family ties
 - Respect for elders as leaders, teachers, advisors to the young
 - Belief that individuals have the right to make decisions affecting their lives
 - Belief in being useful, doing for ones self and rely on spiritual powers to chart their course

- Nursing Implications for Native Americans
 - Typical nursing assessment may be offensive
 - Reluctant to use outside services
 - Will remain calm in the most serious situations
 - Not to be mistaken for the absence of feeling, crying or discomfort

- Health Risks for Native Americans
 - Rise in certain preventable diseases (diabetes)
 - Recent high prevalence of rheumatoid arthritis
 - May be related to genetic predisposition to autoimmune rheumatoid arthritis
 - Cancer survival rate lower than any U.S. Population
 - Need for health education regarding early screening and reducing risks

- Native American Culture
 - Strong reverence for the Great Creator
 - State of health linked to good or evil, punishment
 - Believe that person must be balanced; illness results from imbalance
 - Use of spiritual rituals, medicine men, herbs etc. for the treatment of illness

Elderly Prison Population

- OA can be part of subcultures that set them apart from society.
- OA age 50 and greater make up 11% of prison population.
- Have poorer health status
 - Lower socioeconomic status
 - Inaccessibility to health care, poor diet, increase in chronic diseases etc.

- Nursing Implications for diverse populations
 - Respect the beauty of diversity and make every effort to preserve it
 - Accommodate dietary preferences
 - Make changes for special practices and unique ways of managing illness
 - Invite family members or contact others regarding information on ethnic practices

- Needs of Future Aged Populations
 - Institutional meal planning that incorporates ethnic foods
 - Multilingual health education literature
 - Readily available translators
 - Provisions for celebration of holidays
 - Special interest groups for residents of long term care facilities

Chapter 4

- Life Transitions and Story
- Role changes
 - Children leave home
 - Freedom from responsibility
 - More free time
 - Loss of meaningful activities
 - Roles of homemaker vs work force
 - Same for males

- Ageism
- Definition-
 - The prejudices and stereotypes that are applied to older people on the basis of their age
- Ageism carries several consequences
 - People are less likely to see the similarities between themselves and the elderly
 - Lack of understanding
 - Reduced opportunities to gain insight

- Misconceptions of Old age
 - Old people are sick and disabled
 - Most old people are in nursing homes
 - Senility comes with old age
 - OA either get cranky or tranquil as they age
 - OA have lower intelligence; resist change
 - OA not able to have sexual intercourse
 - There are few satisfactions in old age

- Erikson Last stage of life cycle
 - Integrity vs. Despair
 - Integrity results when the older adult derives satisfaction from an evaluation of his or her life
 - Disappointments with life and the lack of opportunity to alter the past bring despair

- Older adults are expected to have limited input into the lives of adult children
- Children are not required to meet the needs of their aging parents for financial support, health services or housing
- The belief that children are the best insurance for old age is fading.

Parenting

- Independence of children
- Free of responsibilities
- Freed from purposeful activities

- Grandparent issues
 - Extended life expectancy is allowing more people to experience the role of grandparenting
- Challenges to Caring for a grandchild
- Nurses can help grandparents stay connected with their children and grandchildren.
 - Audio tapes, computer , scrap books,

- Adjusting to Widowhood
 - Developing alternative roles
 - Dealing with income issues
 - Adjusting to loss of sexual partner
 - Choosing a new lifestyle
 - Obtaining benefits

- Challenges in retirement
 - Dealing with threatened identity
 - Judging worth by an individual's productivity
 - Overcoming attitude that unemployment is an undesirable state
 - Finding a new source for activities, interests and social contacts

- Phases of retirement
 - Remote phase
 - Near phase
 - Honeymoon phase
 - Disenchantment phase
 - Reorientation phase
 - Stability phase
 - Termination phase

- Nursing Interventions for Retirement
- Near phase
- Honeymoon phase
- Disenchantment phase
- Reorientation phase
- Stability phase
- Termination phase

- Retirement Income
 - Less than income during working years
 - Obtain benefits
 - Older adult needs help obtaining all the benefits they are entitled to
 - Manage money
 - Be aware of the impact that finances have on health status
 - More than one in six live in poverty; a minority are financially comfortable

Changes in Health and Functioning

- Sometimes difficult for aging person to accept:
 - Hair turns gray
 - Straight fingers bent
 - Body contours altered
 - Become shorter
 - Slow response
 - Fatigue

As subtle, gradual and natural as these changes are they are noticeable and affect body image and self concept

- Shrinking Social World
 - Loneliness –can emphasize misfortunes
 - Isolation –can occur in rural as well as urban areas
 - Hearing and speech deficits and language differences can foster loneliness
 - Difference between being alone and being lonely
 - Periods of solitude are necessary at all levels in order to reflect and better understand one's life.

- Nursing Interventions for Social Isolation
 - Provide telephone reassurance/ home visits
 - Faith community assistance
 - Locate and join social groups
 - Change housing to provide a safe environment
 - Relocate OA to an area where members of the same ethnic group live
 - Use pets as companions for the elderly

Life Review and Life History

- Positive and negative aspects
- Benefits to young
 - Learn about ancestry
 - Describe events that have occurred in the family
 - Realize the link with the past

Eliciting Life Stories

- Page 44-45

Strengthening Inner Resources

- Older adults possess significant inner resources:
- Physical
- Emotional
- Spiritual
- That have enabled them to survive.
 - As nurses we must empower our older adults

