Caring for the Older Adult Living in the Community Teaching Strategy

Overview of Teaching Strategy

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of U.S. adults aged 65 years old or older will more than double to reach about 71 million by 2030. Many of these older adults will continue to live and enjoy life in their communities. Health promotion for older adults living in the community is directed at interventions and services to prolong independence and functional status. This teaching strategy can be used to enhance the learning of students in beginning prelicensure nursing courses. Students will examine older adults' functional, physical, emotional, and mental health needs using the ACE.S framework. In addition, students will use therapeutic communication skills to assess older adults’ wishes, expectations, cultural traditions, strengths, community resources, and family/caregiver involvement.

Learning Objectives

Students will:
- Interact intentionally with older adults living independently in the community.
- Assess and recognize the functional physical, emotional, and mental needs of older adults living in the community.
- Communicate effectively with clients and family.
- Describe the role of the nurse when providing care to older adults in the community.
- Discuss previously held beliefs/assumptions about how older adults live independently in the community.
- Assess older adults’ risks and understand the importance of weighing risks and benefits when caring for older adults.

ACE.S Knowledge Domains
- Individualized Aging
- Complexity of Care

ACE.S Essential Nursing Actions
- Assess Function and Expectations
- Coordinate and Manage Care
- Make Situational Decisions

NLN Competencies for Graduates of Nursing Programs
- Human Flourishing
- Nursing Judgment
- Professional Identity
- Spirit of Inquiry

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Getting Started

This teaching strategy focuses on the following ACES Essential Nursing Actions: Assess Function and Expectations, Coordinate and Manage Care, and Make Situational Decisions. The strategy enhances the students’ human flourishing, nursing judgment, professional identity, and spirit of inquiry.

1. The following tools can be used in a variety of settings to enhance student learning and understanding of the needs of the older adult living in the community.

   - Concept maps are useful to assess the needs of older adults living in the community, as well as address complex chronic problems that may be occurring. Case studies foster students’ critical thinking by illustrating and contextualizing the complexities associated with older adults. This approach may be best suited for small group discussions or post-clinical debriefings/discussions.
   - Interview of an older adult living in the community will give the student an opportunity to discuss the needs of an older adult who lives directly in this setting, rather than using an inpatient setting during an acute exacerbation. In the community setting, the student can not only interview the older adult, but can also assess the environmental needs directly, coordinate care as necessary, and discuss situational decisions with the patient and the caregiver(s).

2. Students should be encouraged to explore web sites such as the Try This:® and How to Try This resources and Innovative Care Models websites for additional assessment tools and information.

Materials

1. Interview overview: Each student will interview an older adult living in the community. Faculty will provide the students with “Student Interview Guide for the Older Adult Visit” and “Student Summary of Visit with the Older Adult” documents. At the completion of the interviews the students will describe the role of the nurse when providing care to the older adult in the community. The students should be prepared to discuss with the faculty member the older adult’s wishes, expectations, mood, level of independence, life transitions, community involvement, functional status, and cultural traditions. Lastly, students should be prepared to explore other needs that may arise in the interview, such as physical activity, nutrition, tobacco and/or substance abuse, responsible sexual behavior, mental health, safety and injury prevention, environmental quality, immunizations, and access to health care. Download a sample interview guide and student summary documents. These can be revised to meet specific programmatic and curriculum needs.

2. Assessment Tools. Students should access and use appropriate assessment tools as needed. Some examples of assessment tools that can be used in the community are:
   - Try This Issue 2 - Katz Index of Independence in Activities of Daily Living (ADL)
   - Try This Issue 9 - Assessing Nutrition in Older Adults
   - Try This Issue 14 - The Modified Caregiver Strain Index (CSI)

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Suggested Reading

The above link provides information and statistics regarding chronic disease and wellbeing of older adults.
- *Older Americans 2010: Key Indicators of Well-Being (Older Americans 2010)* provides a comprehensive picture of our older population’s health and well-being. It is the fifth chartbook prepared by the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics (Forum).
- [http://consultgeri.org/](http://consultgeri.org/), the website of the Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing at New York University's College of Nursing, contains many evidence-based assessment tools. Those listed below from the *Try This: and How to Try This* series are particularly recommended for the content on geriatric syndromes. The tool, an article about using the tool, and a video illustrating the use of the tool, are all available for your use. The SPICES tool is listed first, since it is an overall assessment tool; the remaining tools are listed in alphabetical order.

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