Advancing Care Excellence for Seniors

Caring for the Older Adult Living in the Community

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 ACES 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.

ACES ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE DOMAINS

- Individualized Aging
- Complexity of Care
ACES ESSENTIAL NURSING ACTIONS

- Assess Function and Expectations
- Coordinate and Manage Care
- Make Situational Decisions

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NLN EDUCATION COMPETENCIES

- Nursing Judgment
- Human Flourishing
- Professional Identity
- Spirit of Inquiry

Click here to go to the NLN Educational Competencies

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

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. Sample interview guide and student summary documents are included at the end of this teaching strategy. These can be revised to meet specific programmatic and curriculum needs.

1. 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)**
- **Try This Issue 16.1 - Beers' Criteria for Potentially Inappropriate Medication Use in the Elderly: Part I - 2002 Criteria Independent of Diagnoses or Conditions**

SUGGESTED READINGS


The above link provides information and statistics regarding chronic disease and wellbeing of older adults.


The above link, *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).

[ConsultGeriRN.org](http://ConsultGeriRN.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.

[Click here](http://ConsultGeriRN.org) to go to ConsultGeriRN.org and the *Try This*® and *How to Try This* resources.

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**STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE OLDER ADULT VISIT**

1. Introduce yourself and the purpose of interview.

2. Tell the older adult that you are interviewing him/her for a class project and that you will share information obtained in the interview with your teacher and with your classmates.

3. Tell the older adult that you will not identify him or her by name, but that you will identify the older adult by referring to their relationship to you (i.e. “my grandfather” or “my next door neighbor”).

4. If the older adult is not comfortable with these criteria, thank the older adult for his or her time and tell the older adult that you will not continue with the interview because you respect his or her right to privacy.
SAMPLE INTERVIEW INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT:

Once the older adult has accepted the criteria listed above, give a brief summary of the purpose of your interview and try to explain the value of this experience for you, for nursing education, and for improving the care provided to older adults living in the community.

“I am so appreciative that you have volunteered to participate with me in my class project. I am a student nurse and I am very interested in the experiences that you have had living independently in the community. I realize that I have much to learn from you and from your experiences, and I am grateful that you have provided me with this opportunity to do that. I am particularly interested in your stories of how living independently has influenced your life, the kinds of things that happen to you, and maybe how you are reminded on a day-to-day basis about what it is like to be living independently even though you may experience some common health problems. By telling me your stories I will gain an understanding of what it is like for you to be healthy and to live on your own.”

1. Can you tell me a story that stands out for you that would show me what living independently in the community means to you?

2. What is your daily routine like?

   Consider:
   - Personal care needs such as hygiene, house cleaning, etc.
   - Grocery shopping, preparing meals
   - Medication (if any) routine
   - Time with spouse/partner, family, friends, or neighbors
   - Health care provider appointments
   - Leisure activities

3. While living here, what are your wishes and expectations? What are your dreams and plans?

4. Tell me about your childhood. (Hometown, parents, siblings, school, etc.)

5. What are the most important things to you?

6. What are some traditions that you participate in? (Holidays, etc.)

7. What risks do you see for yourself? Are there some risks that you’re willing to take or not take related to your health and wellbeing? Describe.
After your visit and interview with an older adult living in the community, write a story about what the older adult told you that best illustrates the older adult’s experience of living independently in the community. Write the story in the first person, just as the older adult related the story to you. Try to be as exact as possible. After you have written your story, think about the following questions.

1. What about the story helped you to gain an understanding of the experience of living independently for older adults?

2. What lessons did you learn?

3. How did your personal assumptions/beliefs about older adults change?

4. What surprised you the most from this experience?

5. What were your concerns?

6. What was the cause of the concern?

7. What further information do you need?

8. How would you include the older adult and the caregiver/family member(s) in the care of this individual in the community setting?

9. What risks did you see for the older adult in the environment? Did the older person see the same risks?

The Student Interview Guide and the Student Summary of Interview forms in this packet were adapted from similar materials used by The Community College of Philadelphia Department of Nursing.