

GEC Channel



Volume 1, Number 2

Published by the Florida Coastal Geriatric Resources, Education, and Training Center (GREAT GEC)

Fall 2008/Winter 2009

Project Director's Message

Naushira Pandya, M.D., CMD



The GREAT GEC is now in its second year of funding as well as collaborative and innovative educational activities. During the first year, we learned many new skills, restructured our professional lives, and also provided over 2,500 educational encounters to students and professionals in many areas of eldercare. Our formal "opening" was held on December 5, 2008, following a geriatric grand rounds session presented by Dr. Douglas Beach, who serves as secretary of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs. We warmly welcome our colleagues, students, community partners, and professionals to our new offices and want to show our appreciation for their support, ideas, and encouragement.

Our team has been active in developing our Web site (www.nova.edu/gec) and putting geriatric education and geriatrics at NSU on the map in Southeast Florida and throughout the state. The site also provides exciting links to state and national events and resources for elders while serving as a showcase for our academic and research activities. Our faculty is developing a Web-based interdisciplinary geriatrics curriculum with modules in psychology, geriatric medicine, nursing, humanities, physical and occupational therapy, nutrition, optometry, pharmacy, public health, podiatry, and dentistry. This course will be utilized fully or in part by health professions students to provide a broader education in geriatrics in the context of their specific field of study. Our hope is to then reach professionals in the community, develop modules for continuing medical education, and enhance communication and exchange of ideas.

However, I do not want to forget the small yet cumulative daily triumphs that are the result of dedication and passion for geriatrics education and better care for our elders at NSU. This includes our

- allied health, osteopathic medicine, and other students doing their practical training in local nursing facilities and at the Southwest Focal Point Senior Center in Pembroke Pines
- nursing students training in the Geriatric Clinic
- faculty members who are providing training in gerontology and psychology to undergraduates

- faculty members engaged in chronic disease management training for Broward County case managers in the Lifelong Learning Institute

- medical students making home visits with the intervention coordinator from the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Broward County

Most importantly, I want to recognize our patients, who entrust us with their care, cheerfully and willingly educate our students, and lend us their wisdom and humor.

GREAT GEC Open House Attracts Sizeable Audience



Dr. Douglas Beach and Dr. Anthony J. Silvagni prepare to cut the grand-opening ribbon.

On December 5, faculty and staff of the GREAT GEC hosted an open house for NSU faculty, staff, and students and GEC consortium members as well as community members and dignitaries from the state of Florida. The day started with a geriatric grand rounds presentation by Douglas Beach,

Ph.D., secretary of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, who spoke to an overflow crowd. During his presentation, Dr. Beach outlined the current status of elderly affairs in Florida and discussed the challenges the state faces with current budget deficits to support Medicare and long-term care.

Following Dr. Beach's presentation, the GREAT GEC, which was established in 2007, held a festive ribbon-cutting ceremony for its newly remodeled center. Over 100 guests attended the special event, which began with the official ribbon cutting by Dr. Anthony J. Silvagni, NSU-COM dean, and Dr. Beach. Dr. Naushira Pandya hosted the open house along with GREAT GEC interdisciplinary faculty and staff from throughout the Health Professions Division. Following the ribbon cutting, Dr. Silvagni addressed the attendees, highlighting the importance of the center in serving Florida's elderly population through student recruitment and interdisciplinary leadership in developing models of coordinated care. He also commended the center's faculty and staff for the involvement of so many disciplines in the GEC and for making the center an outstanding interdisciplinary model of excellence.

GREAT GEC Executive Director's Corner

Cecilia Rokusek, Ed.D., R.D.



As we look to the New Year, I am reminded of what my father used to say: "It's a new year; we are a year older but a year wiser!" 2008 certainly was a year of learning. If we do not keep our positive aging philosophy in mind, we may look back on 2008 with some dismay. The good news, I believe, is that there is a feeling of optimism and hope for the future in the geriatrics field as we look to the New Year. I just returned from the Gerontology Society of America (GSA) meeting in National Harbor, Maryland, where the theme of resilience in aging was resonant throughout the halls and ballrooms. This is truly where we need to focus as interdisciplinary providers and individuals in the normal aging process.

I attended several outstanding sessions at the GSA meeting and so wished our congressional leaders could have been there. The demographic realities are there, and the excellent research is clear: Interdisciplinary investments upfront to promote positive and healthy aging will enhance quality of living and ultimately healthy aging with reduced medical and social service costs. High on the priority list of investments is education for students to enter geriatrics practice at all levels and all professions. I believe that with well-trained professionals and paraprofessionals in adequate numbers, resilience and positive aging will result. Concurrently with strong community-based programs that include social, medical, and financial support, aging results for the future can be viewed each year as "better and wiser."

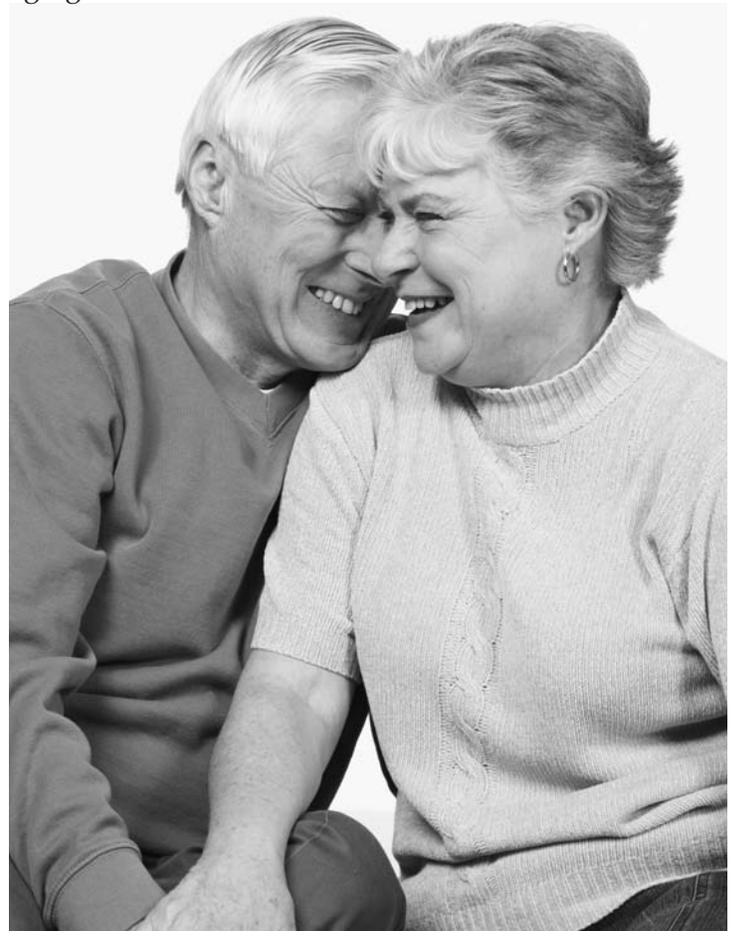
As providers, we must always remember to be resilient ourselves. Over the last few years, this term has expanded more and is often used interchangeably with *coping* and *adapting*. There are differences in these two terms in that coping more accurately means the ability to deal with a stressful situation. Adaptation more accurately refers to a person's ability to take steps and measures to improve one's overall well-being in relation to a situation or environmental occurrence. That is why resilience is such a good term because it really combines coping and adaptation. Resilience is something we should all strive to develop during our lifelong process of aging. Oftentimes our resilience is only evident in times of

adversity. It should be something that is a positive *force* with us all the time.

From 2000 to 2030, the number of individuals aged 80 years and older will double in the United States. This means we will have over 19.5 million people in the country who are living longer than at any other time in our history. The importance of resilience for this population group cannot be overemphasized with the challenges that come from normal physiological aging. Without question, resilience will be a major determinant of quality of life.

In a wonderful Centers for Disease Control and Prevention paper by Lynne S. Wilcox, M.D., M.P.H., published in January 2008, the question of resilience being inborn, promoted, or developed over time is posed. Could it be a combination of the three? I will leave that to our readers with one plea—look at your own resilience. Does it affect the way you live, work, play, and age?

May 2009 be a year full of great wisdom and positive aging for all of us!



NSU Physical Therapy Department Participation Helps Enhance the GREAT GEC

By Debra F. Stern, D.B.A., M.S.M., PT, Assistant Professor of Physical Therapy
Nova Southeastern University College of Allied Health and Nursing

The Nova Southeastern University (NSU) Physical Therapy Department is honored to be a GEC participating program. Although represented by Dr. Debra Stern on the grant itself, the physical therapy faculty and students are actively engaged in a variety of geriatric programs and activities.

Service learning and community commitment are integral components of the physical therapy curriculum. Consistent with the mission of NSU and the entry level Doctor of Physical Therapy Program, faculty and students have been actively engaged in geriatric screenings and other community health initiatives for older adults. Examples of these activities in recent academic years include

- screenings for balance and fall prevention as well as musculoskeletal health at a local senior center and a Speaking of Women's Health event
- general wellness screenings at the NSU Tower Shops FOMA Health Fair, the REACH fairs in Belle Glade and Clewiston, Boomers and Beyond at NSU, and the Hamilton House in Plantation

The department also is active in responding to community requests for services as available throughout the year.

Faculty members are actively involved in the education of community professionals in areas relevant to geriatrics and have presented posters and interactive lectures at conferences such as the American Physical Therapy Association's Annual Combined Sections Meeting, the HIPERS conference at NSU, the GREAT GEC's Interdisciplinary Geriatrics Symposium at NSU, and local hospitals. As a continuing education provider acknowledged by the state of Florida, awarding of continuing education credits helps to attract local physical therapists and physical therapist assistants to the NSU campus based upon continuing education offerings.

Curricula content has been modified in the recent past to stress the importance of geriatric training that is consistent with changing demographics. Innovative approaches for both facilitating learning in PT students and interesting them in geriatric practice have been implemented or are in the initial stages of development. NSU is one of the physical therapy programs recognized nationally for its self-contained clinical education program. In 2002-03, the department was one of two institutions of higher education awarded a grant from the American Physical Therapy Association to

study alternative clinical education models. The NSU model included an eight-week geriatric self-contained component. Two components of the current program are geriatrics-oriented: TIER IA—the first part-time clinical education experience with time split between a local skilled nursing facility and joint replacement unit at a local Broward Health hospital, and TIER IB, which is followed by a four-week full-time rotation in a skilled nursing facility.

Didactic geriatric curricula components include a gerontology course that is integrated into the TIER IA course, which is multidimensional and includes a standard lecture, self-directed learning, and guest lectures by geriatric specialists in medicine and psychology. The clinical component facilitates integration of the didactic classroom learning. Learning also occurs at the on-campus outpatient rehabilitation clinic with older adults who visit the facility for a variety of needs, including balance and fall risk assessment and intervention.

The newest curricula innovation will be instituted in the winter and spring of 2009. Interdisciplinary modules, created by each profession represented in the GEC grant, will be introduced in the PT Gerontology course. Students will be able to learn about other health professionals and their role in geriatric client management by accessing Web-based educational modules. Likewise, other disciplines will be able to access a physical therapy module. Additionally, all PT students will be required to complete a four-week, full-time clinical rotation in a skilled nursing facility serving skilled patients and long-term residents as previously indicated.

With the aging of the baby boomers and a growing aging population, regardless of the setting a health profession chooses to work in (with the exception of pediatrics or professional sports), there will be aging clientele. Recognizing this, the NSU entry level Doctor of Physical Therapy Program is actively working with the other services in the GREAT GEC to provide exciting learning opportunities to students, the local community, and professionals while emphasizing healthy aging and wellness.

Correction: In the summer 2008 issue of the *GEC Channel*, the Fischler School of Education and Human Services was inadvertently excluded from the list of NSU colleges and centers serving as GREAT GEC discipline leaders.

GREAT GEC Establishes International Linkages



Dr. Ivana Dolezelova; Dr. Philipp, CEO, Thomayer Hospital and Geriatrics Clinic in Prague; and Dr. Rokusek.

In September 2008, Dr. Cecilia Rokusek visited the Czech and Slovak republics. While there, she met with interdisciplinary geriatrics leaders in Prague and Bratislava. In Prague, Dr. Rokusek met with Dr. Ivana Dolezelova, head of the geriatrics clinic and professor of geriatrics at Thomayer Hospital and Geriatrics Clinic. During their meeting, Dr. Rokusek toured the hospital and met with the hospital director to discuss collaborative possibilities and opportunities for student and faculty exchanges.

Similar to the situation that currently exists in the United States, geriatric education in the Czech Republic is in need of additional funding. Students have an interest to go into geriatrics but oftentimes there is a lack of funding for advanced graduate study and fellowships in geriatrics. Education is almost entirely funded by the government, and programs are dependent on annual funding. As a result of this meeting in Prague, there is ongoing dialogue with Thomayer Hospital leadership in hopes that an interdisciplinary geriatrics center for education can be established there like those that exist in the United States.



Discussions in Bratislava about health, education, and geriatric care were conducted by (from left): Joe Senko M.S., CPA, honorary consul for Pennsylvania; Ross Marine M.H.A., honorary consul for Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska; Greg Fasing, J.D., honorary consul for Colorado; and Dr. Rokusek, honorary consul for Florida.

In Bratislava, Slovakia, Dr. Rokusek met with Edward Kemp, public affairs officer for the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava. They discussed several educational opportunities for the future, including geriatrics education for students in

the health professions. Dr. Rokusek then met with Dr. Daniela Ostatnikova, associate dean for international affairs for Comenius University, School of Medicine. As a result of their meeting, a faculty exchange is being developed and continued planning on an affiliation agreement is ongoing. Dr. Rokusek summed up her informative trip by saying, "The energy and excitement I felt from my meetings cannot subside. We have so much to learn from each other, and our students and faculty from both sides of the Atlantic can benefit from our collaborative work. The growing influence of aging baby boomers is a worldwide reality."

The *GEC Channel* is published through the NSU-COM Florida Coastal Geriatric Resources, Education, and Training Center (GREAT GEC).

Editor/Graphic Design

Scott Colton, B.A., Director of Medical Communications

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GREAT GEC
College of Osteopathic Medicine
3446 South University Drive
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33328-2018
(954) 262-1078
<http://www.nova.edu/gec>



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