



THE AMERICAN GERIATRICS SOCIETY

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WHY GERIATRICS AS A CAREER CHOICE?

“Geriatrics is the most challenging and exciting area of patient care. The patients are the most ill, most complex, and the most dependent on our skills and wisdom for their persistence as independent living people. The opportunities for research in geriatrics are essentially unlimited.”

David H. Solomon, MD
Director, UCLA Center on Aging
UCLA School of Medicine

WHAT IS GERIATRICS?

Geriatrics refers to the clinical aspects of aging and the comprehensive health care of older persons. It is an area of medicine that focuses on health and disease in old age. Although commonly believed to be a new field, the study of geriatrics actually began in the early 1900's with the first book on the subject by Dr. Ignatz L. Nascher, who proposed the term “Geriatrics,” stemming from the Greek “geras” meaning “old age,” and “iatrikos” meaning “physician.” However, formal training in geriatrics is relatively new, providing challenging clinical and research opportunities under outstanding leadership and accessible mentors.

WHY GERIATRICS AS A CAREER CHOICE?

◆ Great Demands in Geriatrics

Meeting the health care needs of older adults is a growing concern of the community. As the proportion of the elderly in our society grows, health care professionals will be spending a greater percentage of time treating them. In general, older persons tend to require more health care services than younger adults.

Clearly, there will be a great demand for health care professionals with training and skills in treating older adults. The impact will be greatest on today's students, as they will be practicing during the peak of the baby boomer generation.

◆ Challenging Field

Care of the elderly is one of the most challenging and exciting areas of health care, combining the biological, psychologic and social changes associated with aging.

◆ Different diagnostic and management strategies

Diagnostic strategies must weigh the potential for uncovering treatable disease with the potential for creating complications. Medical and surgical treatments require careful selection. Psychosocial interventions may help the older individual access care and support resources.

◆ Prevention

In later stages of life, prevention can still be very effective. The quality of life of older persons can be enhanced with the help of a professional who emphasizes preventive strategies. Health maintenance and improvement of quality of life involves more than a narrow focus on major medical problems. Careful listening, encouragement, advocacy, patient education, goal setting and value clarification are among the most valuable interventions health care providers can make in promoting health and well-being.

“A profession in geriatric social work continues to be territory with a frontier that just keeps growing. This work provides a real opportunity to actually make a positive difference in the lives of older adults & their family members.”

Irene Moore, MSW
Director, Geriatric Evaluation Center
University of Cincinnati

◆ **Interdisciplinary approach**

Geriatrics stresses the importance of all members of the health care team working together. Members of the American Geriatrics Society were among the first to recognize the value of comprehensive geriatric assessment, a practice that brings together a team of health care providers including physicians, nurses, social workers, physical and occupational therapists and pharmacists among others, to address the physical, psychological and social needs of an older person.

◆ **Potential to make a difference**

Working with older patients gives geriatric team members the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of older persons and their families. Concurrently, older persons can provide unique perspectives based on a lifetime of experiences, making the job not only challenging but also rewarding.

" Geriatric nursing is a field that affords professional nurses great autonomy and a diverse and broad range of career opportunities. The care needs of older adults are the essence of excellent nursing care. As the scientific base for geriatric medicine and nursing continues to expand, geriatric nursing can only become more exciting "

Terry Fulmer RN, PhD, FAAN
Co-Director Hartford Institute,
NYU Division of Nursing

WHAT CAREER OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE IN GERIATRICS?

With the changing needs of the health care system, there exists diverse career options and a high demand for health professionals trained in geriatrics. For further information please visit:

The American Geriatric Society

www.americangeriatrics.org

The Gerontological Society of America

www.geron.org

National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

www.naswdc.org

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)

www.cswe.org

American Federation on Aging Research

www.afar.org/

American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry

www.aagpgpa.org

American Society of Consultant Pharmacists

www.ascp.com

The American Medical Student Association (AMSA)

www.amsa.org

National Gerontological Nursing Association

www.ngna.org

Institute of Gerontological Nursing

<http://www.hartfordign.org/>

HOW CAN YOU FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE FIELD OF GERIATRICS?

If you're interested in finding out more about the field of geriatrics, or how to become involved in the American Geriatric Society during your school years, contact the American Geriatrics Society at (800) 247-4779, or visit the website at www.americangeriatrics.org. You can also contact the AGS for names of prominent geriatricians and other health care professionals in geriatrics as potential mentors and contacts for further information.

"Having played roles as a general physician, rheumatologist, and academic administrator, I find that the practice of geriatrics and the varied issues that surround this practice is the most challenging and rewarding aspect of my medical career."

Evan Calkins, MD
Professor of Medicine
State University of New York at Buffalo