This course supports the assessment for Care of the Older Adult. The course covers 10 competencies and represents 3 competency units.

Introduction

Overview
An understanding of the effects that policy and legislation have on aging patients within the healthcare system sets a foundation for improving their care. Emphasis is placed on the specific needs of aging patients and the importance of maintaining their dignity.

Getting Started
Welcome to the Care of the Older Adult course! You will be directly linked to each of the 3 primary learning resources—VitalSource e-text, the Portal of Geriatrics Online Education (POGO), and the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) Genetics, Genomics, Genethics course companion, and a variety of supplemental materials as needed throughout the course. To demonstrate competency in this course, you must successfully complete the AMNH Genetics, Genomics, and Genethics quiz with a score of 80% or higher to obtain the Genetics, Genomics, and Genethics certificate, and complete the objective assessment. To plan your learning time, start by watching the Welcome Video, review the Learning Resources, complete the preassessment to identify the areas in which you have already achieved competency, and review the Pacing Guide. Check the course announcements for useful messages about the course and contact your course mentors for assistance as questions arise.

Watch the following video introduction for this course:

Note: To download this video, right-click the following link and choose Save as...: [download video]

Competencies
This course provides guidance to help you demonstrate the following 10 competencies:

- **Competency 742.1.1: Compassionate and Respectful Care of Older Adults**
  The graduate integrates principles of compassion and respect for patients and their families into the planning and delivery of care to a diverse population of older adults and into advocacy for vulnerable older adults.

- **Competency 742.1.2: Health Promotion/Maintenance and Living Environments of Older Adults**
  The graduate evaluates the older adults' life and world with special awareness of the diversity among the health status of older adults, individualizing care according to the physical, mental/cognitive, functional, and psycho-social well-being of an elder patient, along with support systems in place.

- **Competency 742.1.3: Health Needs of Older Adults**
  The graduate effectively collaborates with patients, families and inter-professional team members in planning primary, secondary, tertiary and end-of-life care that addresses
older adults' physical, mental, psychosocial and spiritual needs and preferences and responses to changes in health status and related treatments.

- **Competency 742.1.4: Promoting Independence and Autonomy While Reducing Risk Factors in Older Adults**
  The graduate recommends techniques to co-create health and illness management practices with older adults and their families (caregivers) that ensure safety and optimal maintenance of functional ability, taking into account patient characteristics and needs and patient and caregiver vulnerabilities as well as strengths.

- **Competency 742.1.5: Promoting Health and Independence in Older Adults**
  The graduate selects appropriate evidence-based standards of health promotion, risk reduction, and disease prevention in older adult populations.

- **Competency 742.1.6: Technology-Assisted Care of Older Adults**
  The graduate collaborates with patients, families and the inter-professional team to select the appropriate application of technology to enhance older adults' safety and independence.

- **Competency 742.1.7: Healthcare Systems and Health Policy**
  The graduate evaluates the effectiveness of the healthcare environment and the influence of health policy in providing care that maximizes the function and independence of older adults in accordance with individual patient characteristics and patient and family needs.

- **Competency 742.1.8: Care Transitions**
  The graduate determines the needs of older adults and their families and caregivers in coordinating patient-centered, safe transitions of care that aim to assure the least restrictive care environment relative to strengths and vulnerabilities, and reduce unnecessary hospitalizations.

- **Competency 742.1.9: Palliative and End-of-life Care**
  The graduate collaborates with patients and families to support palliative care needs in order to reduce symptom burden and treatment fatigue and enhance quality of life, as well as end-of-life care that is compassionate, respectful, patient centered, and family supported.

- **Competency 742.1.10: Genomics in Adult Care**
  The graduate plans and provides patient care that incorporates genomic influences and risks and provides patient education that recognizes individual attitudes and values.

**Course Mentor Assistance**
As you prepare to demonstrate competency in this subject, remember that course mentors stand ready to help you reach your educational goals. As subject matter experts, mentors enjoy and take pride in helping students become reflective learners, problem solvers, and critical thinkers. Course mentors are excited to hear from you and eager to work with you.

Successful students report that working with a course mentor is the key to their success. Course mentors are able to share tips on approaches, tools, and skills that can help you apply the content you're studying. They also provide guidance in assessment preparation strategies and troubleshoot areas of deficiency. Even if things don’t work out on your first try, course mentors act as a support system to guide you through the revision process. You should expect to work with course mentors for the duration of your coursework, so you are welcome to contact them.
as soon as you begin. Course mentors are fully committed to your success!

Preparing for Success

The information in this section is provided to detail the resources available for you to use as you complete this course.

Learning Resources

The learning resources listed in this section are required to complete the activities in this course. For many resources, WGU has provided automatic access through the course. However, you may need to manually enroll in or independently acquire other resources. Read the full instructions provided to ensure that you have access to all of your resources in a timely manner.

Automatically Enrolled Learning Resources

You will be automatically enrolled at the activity level for the following learning resources. Simply click on the links provided in the activities to access the learning materials.

VitalSource E-Txts

The following textbook is available to you as an e-text within this course. You will be directly linked to the specific readings required within the activities that follow.


*Note: This e-text is available to you as part of your program tuition and fees, but you may purchase a hard copy at your own expense through a retailer of your choice. If you choose to do so, please use the ISBN listed to ensure that you receive the correct edition.*

AMNH Online Certificate

To complete this course, you will be required to complete the American Museum of Natural History “Genetics, Genomics, Genethics for Nursing” online course. This is a required, online, self-paced course, and upon completion, your score will be sent directly to WGU. Please save a copy of your final AMNH Certificate as it will be required in additional courses.

- AMNH Genetics, Genomics, Genethics for Nursing

Other Learning Resources

You will use the following learning resources for this course.

Portal of Geriatrics Online Education

This course requires engagement with several specific resources from the Portal of Geriatrics Online Education.

- Portal of Geriatrics Online Education

Study Guide

As you complete your course work utilize the study guide to further your learning.
Pacing Guide
The pacing guide suggests a weekly structure to pace your completion of learning activities. It is provided as a suggestion and does not represent a mandatory schedule. Follow the pacing guide carefully to complete the course in the suggested timeframe.

Week 1

- **Introduction and Preparing for Success**
  - Explore Cohort Offerings
  - Review Portal of Geriatric Online Education (POGO)

- **Genomics in Adult Care**
  - Complete the American Museum of Natural History Course: Genetics, Genomics, Genethics for Nursing
  - This 4-module course may be done either before or after the exam.

- **Compassionate and Respectful Care of Older Adults**
  - Read pages 7–8 Attitudes Toward Aging and Older Adults in Chapter 1
  - Read pages 16–22 in Chapter 1 Healthcare Settings
  - Review Table 1–2 Core Competencies
  - Read Chapter 4 Aging Changes that Affect Communication
  - Read Chapter 5 Therapeutic Communications with Older Adults
  - Read pages 602–614 in Chapter 18 Appreciating Diversity & Enhancing Intimacy

- **Health Promotion/Maintenance and Living Environments of Older Adults**
  - Read Chapter 12 Identifying & Preventing Common Risk Factors in the Elderly
  - Read Chapter 22 Promoting Quality of Life
  - Review Assessment Tools
  - Review Geriatricized Clinical Skills Checklist on the POGO website
  - Review website on Geriatric Pain

Week 2

- **Health Needs of Older Adults**
  - Read Chapter 6 Review of the Aging Physiological Systems
  - Read Chapter 7 Assessment of the Older Adult
  - View videos on Delirium and Fulmer SPICES tool
  - Read Chapter 8 Medications and Laboratory Values
  - Read Chapter 13 Management of Common Illnesses, Disease & Health Conditions
  - Read Chapter 14 Management of Common Problems
  - Read Chapter 15 Management of Dementia
  - Read article on Geriatric Syndrome
  - Review article "Standard of Nursing Practice Protocol: Reducing Adverse Drug Events"
  - Review web links for Beers Criteria
- Promoting Independence and Autonomy While Reducing Risk Factors in Older Adults
  - Read Chapter 17 Ethical/Legal Principles and Issues
  - Read article on Physical Restraints
  - Read article "Chemical and Physical Restraint Use in the Older Person"
  - Complete the case study on "Restraint Use in the Elderly"
  - View videos: Elder Mistreatment Assessment and Avoiding Restraints for Elderly Dementia Patients

Week 3

- Promoting Health and Independence in Older Adults
  - Review website for CDC: Promoting Preventative Services for Adults 50–64
  - Read Chapter 10 Promoting Independence in Later Life
  - Read Chapter 11 Promoting Healthy Aging
- Technology-Assisted Care of Older Adults
  - Read Chapter 9 Teaching Older Adults
  - Read Chapter 16 Using Assistive Technology to Promote Quality of Life for Older Adults
  - Review the resources for Cultural Competency
  - Review the resources for Technology and Cultural Diversity

Week 4

- Healthcare Systems and Health Policy
  - View video: Geriatric Resources
  - Read Chapter 25 Trends that Impact Gerontological Nursing
  - View video: HealthCare Systems and HealthCare Policy
  - Review summary sheets for Affordable Care Act & Medicare
  - Review website: IHI Triple Aim Initiative
  - Review Medicare & Medicaid FAQs
  - Read Chapter 19 Global Models of Health Care
- Care Transitions
  - Read Chapter 20 The Interdisciplinary Team
  - Review the resources for Care Transitions Model
  - Read Chapter 23 The Gerontological Nurse as Manager and Leader
- Palliative Care and End-of-Life Care
  - Read Chapter 24 End-of-Life Care
  - Complete Death & Dying simulation exercise on page 752 (Box 24-3)
  - Review webpage: Center to Advance Palliative Care
  - Review Chapter 17 Ethical/Legal Principles and Issues
  - Read the article "Culturally Diverse Communities and End-of-Life Care"
  - Read the NIH module: End of Life: Helping with Comfort and Care

Final Steps

- Take the Objective Assessment
• Complete the American Museum of Natural History Course: Genetics, Genomics, Genethics for Nursing

Note: This pacing guide does not replace the course. Please continue to refer to the course for a comprehensive list of the resources and activities.

Genomics in Adult Care

Modern medicine is founded on an increasingly deepening understanding of genomics and genetics, and to be an effective nurse, you will need to have a deep understanding of these concepts as well.

Genomics and Older Adults

You will be expected to understand the role genomes and genetics play in planning older patient care, and be able to explain these concepts to those patients in ways they understand.

This topic addresses the following competency:

• Competency 742.1.10: Genomics in Adult Care
  The graduate plans and provides patient care that incorporates genomic influences and risks and provides patient education that recognizes individual attitudes and values.

American Museum of Natural History Genomics Focus

Completion of the American Museum of Natural History focus on “Genetics, Genomics, Genethics for Nursing” can take up to four weeks. This certification is required for your assessment. When you have finished your AMNH work, your score will be sent directly to WGU. Please save a copy of your final AMNH Certificate as it will be required in additional courses.

Compassionate and Respectful Care of Older Adults

The history and development of gerontological nursing is rich in diversity and experiences, as is the population it serves. No matter where nurses practice, they will at some point in time care for older adults. As a nurse, you will need to integrate principles of compassion and respect for patients and their families into the planning of care and advocacy for older adults as a vulnerable population.

Attitude and Interactions with Older Adults

As a nurse, you may have preconceived ideas about caring for older adults. Such ideas are influenced by your observations of family members, friends, neighbors, the media, and your own personal experience with older adults.

You will explore the impact of attitudes, values, and expectations about aging. You will also identify strategies to address negative attitudes and interactions with older adults and explore accepted theories and myths about aging.
This topic addresses the following competency:

- **Competency 742.1.1: Compassionate and Respectful Care of Older Adults**
  The graduate integrates principles of compassion and respect for patients and their families into the planning and delivery of care to a diverse population of older adults and into advocacy for vulnerable older adults.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Recognize the impact of attitudes, values, and expectations about aging.
- Describe how the RN’s personal beliefs and values may impact the care of older adults.
- Develop a relationship with older adults applying the concepts from this section.

**Attitudes Toward Aging and Older Adults**

It is important to understand how care of aging adults is accomplished across the continuum of care.

Read the following sections in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care* to gain understanding in the variety of settings that older adults receive during nursing care:

- pages 7–8 Attitudes Toward Aging and Older Adults in chapter 1 Introduction to Gerontological Nursing
- pages 16–22 Healthcare Settings in chapter 1 Introduction to Gerontological Nursing

Look at the list of competencies for Gerontological nurses.

- Table 1-2 Core Competencies in chapter 1 Introduction to Gerontological Nursing

Answer the following questions in your notebook:

- How many of these competencies do you feel you meet at this point?
- Which competencies do you feel you could develop further?
- What barriers would you anticipate in trying to develop these competencies?

**Planning Person-Centered Care of Older Adults**

No matter what similarities there are in the demographic of aging adults, each patient you work with is an individual with a unique background and viewpoint on life. Your care will need to be filtered through the patient’s attitudes as well as your own.

You will examine various communication strategies and techniques when working with older adults. Using communication concepts, you will also learn about and how to promote compassionate and individualized care for older adults with chronic illness.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- **Competency 742.1.1: Compassionate and Respectful Care of Older Adults**
The graduate integrates principles of compassion and respect for patients and their families into the planning and delivery of care to a diverse population of older adults and into advocacy for vulnerable older adults.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Articulate the concept of individualized care as the standard of practice with older adults, considering the right care, at the right time, in the right place and by the right provider of care.
- Apply effective and respectful communication strategies in the care of older adults and their families.
- Support individual health goals that range from healthy activities to simply achieving comfort.
- Illustrate compassionate and individualized care for older adults with chronic illness that reduces symptom burden and seeks to preserve quality of life.

**Identifying Communication Techniques**

How we communicate is often as important as what we communicate.

Read the following chapters in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*, to gain understanding of communication issues when caring for older adults:

- chapter 4 Aging Changes That Affect Communication
- chapter 5 Therapeutic Communications with Older Adults

**Self Check:** Answer the following questions in your notebook:

- List the senses involved in communication and how those senses help the older adult to interpret various forms of communication.
- List age-related physiological changes that affect communication.
- Define verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Explain the importance of using open-ended questions when communicating with an older adult.

**Communication Exercise**

Imagine you are a nurse admitting an 87-year-old man in a wheelchair who is accompanied by his wife. List 10 non-verbal behaviors you may use during the admission interview to enhance communication.

**Diverse Populations**

The global nature of modern society increases the likelihood that you will have patients from cultures different from your own. Communication skills that demonstrate respect and flexibility will provide comfort for both you and your patients.

Read the following section in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*. 
• pages 602–614 in chapter 18 Appreciating Diversity and Enhancing Intimacy

In your notebook, answer the questions posed by Case Study 18-1 (page 604).

Health Promotion/Maintenance and Living Environments of Older Adults

You will learn strategies to evaluate the environments where older adults spend most of their time, and you will focus on the functional, physical, cognitive, and social changes common in older adults.

Living Environment

Older adults have a multitude of complex living environment concerns. Interdisciplinary involvement is often necessary to ensure that older adults have an appropriate and stimulating environment according to their physical and social needs.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- **Competency 742.1.2: Health Promotion/Maintenance and Living Environments of Older Adults**
  The graduate evaluates the older adults' lifeworld with special awareness of the diversity among the health status of older adults, individualizing care according to the physical, mental/cognitive, functional, and psycho-social well-being of an elder patient, along with support systems in place.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Identify functional and physical changes in the aging adult that would necessitate changes to the living environment.
- Identify cognitive, psychological, and social changes common to the aging adult that would necessitate changes to the living environment.
- Recognize steps to mitigate common physical safety issues.
- Analyze the living environment of a given older adult with special awareness of the functional, physical, cognitive, psychological, and social changes of aging.

Common Risk Factors

Read the following chapter in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- chapter 12 Identifying and Preventing Common Risk Factors in the Elderly

Self-Check: In your notebook, address the following questions:

- How do these risk factors affect the living environment and arrangements for older adults?
How can adaptations be made in living environments so that compromised adults can live in the least restrictive environment?
What professionals in other fields can you call on to assist in recommending or making adaptations to living environments?

Promoting Quality of Life

Read the following chapter in Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care.

- chapter 22 Promoting Quality of Life

Record your thoughts about the following questions in your notebook:

- How does independence relate to quality of life?
- What lifestyle changes can have dramatic impact on improving quality of life for older adults?
- How can the healthcare provider impact social factors to help improve quality of life for older adults?

Assessing Older Adults

Assessing older adults is the responsibility of several members of the health team. This section addresses the assessment of mostly social and functional issues. You will learn how to incorporate valid and reliable tools into the assessment of the functional, physical, cognitive, psychological, and social status of older adults.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- Competency 742.1.2: Health Promotion/Maintenance and Living Environments of Older Adults
  The graduate evaluates the older adults' lifeworld with special awareness of the diversity among the health status of older adults, individualizing care according to the physical, mental/cognitive, functional, and psycho-social well-being of an elder patient, along with support systems in place.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Incorporate valid and reliable tools into the assessment of the functional, physical, cognitive, psychological, and social status of older adults.
- Apply knowledge of diverse social and cultural influences when assessing the care needs for older adults in a given situation.
- Evaluate family ability to perform the skills necessary to deliver care to a given older adult.

Assessment Tools

Review two or more of the following assessment tools. Open the text document then watch the video that demonstrates using the tool in practice. Evaluate the effectiveness of each tool for use in your practice:
The Modified Caregiver Strain Index (MCSI)

- **Assessment Tool**
- **Video**: View the first 12:25 minutes and minutes 24:16 to 27.47

Assessing Family Preferences for Participation in Care in Hospitalized Older Adults

- **Assessment Tool**

Pain Assessment for Older Adults

- **Assessment Tool**
- **Video**: View minutes 29.35 to 36.36

Mental Status of Older Adults: The Mini-Cog

- **Assessment Tool**
- **Video**: View the first 7.02 minutes

Confusion Assessment

- **Assessment Tool** (to access full text, select Article as PDF)
- **Video**

**Assessments While Conducting a Health History**

As a nurse, you may have significant responsibility for conducting health history interviews. The resources in the following web page are written for the medical provider, but they show how you can also contribute to assessing several different areas of need in the patient's life.

The following web page leads to specific content on the Portal of Geriatric Online Education:

- **Geriatricized Clinical Skills Checklist**

Open and read the following two documents on the above website. These are the first two documents listed in the gray "Attachments" box.

- **Principles of Care**
- **Complete History Checklist**

Record your thoughts about the following questions in your notebook:

- How does color coding help the care provider stay organized during the health history?
- Which topics (colors) will be most useful to you during a health history?
- How does color coding help ensure that you fully cover the topics during the interview?
- How does a care provider's interview differ from the nurse's interview?

**Other Internet Activities**
Access the following website:

- Geriatric Pain

Search the Education resources, and other items of interest to you. Make note of resources that will be helpful in your practice with older adults.

**Health Needs of Older Adults**

Comprehensive assessment is the foundation of an individualized plan of care for an older adult. Enhanced skills in comprehensive geriatric assessment can improve health outcomes, increase nursing assessment confidence, and provide a role model for health care teams.

You will review how to effectively plan care to address the older adult social, physical, cognitive, and emotional response to disease, injury, treatment, pharmacology and disability.

**Assessing Needs**

You will identify physiologic changes in the older adult that impact screening, health promotion, and treatment choices. You will also analyze the relationship between pharmokinetics and pharmodynamics.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- **Competency 742.1.3: Health Needs of Older Adults**
  
The graduate effectively collaborates with patients, families and inter-professional team members in planning primary, secondary, tertiary and end-of-life care that addresses older adults' physical, mental, psychosocial and spiritual needs and preferences and responses to changes in health status and related treatments.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Identify how the physiological changes of aging affect the organs involved in absorption and excretion of medications
- Recognize functional changes and mobility issues that may threaten independence in the older adult.
- Identify factors that may contribute to alterations in nutrition, metabolism, and elimination in older adults.
- Recognize the signs and symptoms of geriatric syndromes and the subsequent frailty that may result.
- Apply knowledge of the aging process and associated risk factors; skills in history-taking and assessment; and respect for the dignity of older adults in a comprehensive, individualized assessment.
- Identify and use valid and reliable standardized tools of functional assessment in older adults.
- Identify and use valid and reliable standardized tools of cognitive assessment in older adults.
- Observe for risks or the presence of the five most common geriatric syndromes.
(pressure ulcers, incontinence, falls, functional decline, and delirium).

**Review of the Physiological Systems**

Read the following chapter in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*.

- **chapter 6 Review of the Aging Physiologic Systems**

**Comprehensive Assessment of the Older Adult**

Read the following chapter in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*.

- **chapter 7 Assessment of the Older Adult**

Watch the following videos:

- Delirium: The Under-Recognized Medical Emergency (51.20)
- Fulmer SPICES: Comprehensive Assessment Tool for Older Adults (20.48)

Self-Check: Complete the Critical Thinking Exercises and the Personal Reflections on pages 255 and 256.

**Medications**

Read the following chapter in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*.

- **chapter 8 Medications and Laboratory Values**

Complete the following items in your notebook:

- Identify the five rights of medication administration.
- What special considerations should be taken into account in relation to older adults?
- What barriers might you encounter?
- Compare and contrast the additional questions necessary to obtain a complete medication history from a middle-aged adult and an elderly adult.
- Identify how the physiological changes of aging affect the organs for absorption and excretion of medications.
- Explain why older adults with multiple comorbidities are more prone to polypharmacy.
- Explain why any symptom in an elderly client should be considered a drug side effect until proved otherwise?
- Outline how to promote evidence-based practice by utilizing the Beer list of potentially unsafe medications for the elderly.

**Planning Care**

Assessment is only the beginning of care. Now you need to apply what you have learned to making a care plan for and with the patient.

This topic addresses the following competency:
Competency 742.1.3: Health Needs of Older Adults
The graduate effectively collaborates with patients, families and inter-professional team members in planning primary, secondary, tertiary and end-of-life care that addresses older adults' physical, mental, psychosocial and spiritual needs and preferences and responses to changes in health status and related treatments.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Compare specified theories of aging, including the genetic theory.
- Describe how to use evidence-based assessment tools and methods to conduct a comprehensive assessment of an older adult.
- Promote quality outcomes through the application of evidence-based practices specific to the care needs of older adults.
- Promote evidence-based practice by utilizing the Beer list of potentially unsafe medications for the elderly.
- Contribute to interdisciplinary plans of care to promote health, reduce risk, and prevent disease in older adults.
- Contribute to interdisciplinary care plans that address common acute and chronic health conditions, such as arthritis, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases that may lead to congestive heart failure, and dementia.
- Consider potential drug side effects in assessing adverse symptoms in older adults.

Management of Common Illnesses, Diseases, and Health Conditions

Read the following chapter in Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care:

- chapter 13 Management of Common Illnesses, Diseases, and Health Conditions

Which of these conditions will be most challenging for you in your practice with older adults? Why?

Management of Common Problems

Read the following in Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care:

- chapter 14 Management of Common Problems

In your notebook complete the following items:

- Describe three examples of different vulnerabilities in older adults. As a healthcare professional, what impact can you expect to make on these vulnerabilities?
- Explain the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic risk factors for falls.
- Name three interventions for fall prevention.
- Explain the difference between a physical and chemical restraint. What are alternatives to restraints?

Managing Dementia
Read the following in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- chapter 15 Management of Dementia

**Personal Reflection**

The nursing staff in a long-term care facility insists that checking residents every 3 hours for incontinence and changing undergarments when needed is more cost-effective and laborsaving than bladder training. They point out that no one has developed skin breakdown.

- Develop a plan to promote continence and a rationale to support implementation.
- Consider your philosophy of nursing and conception of care for the elderly in the rationale.

**Geriatric Syndromes**

Geriatric Syndrome is a term used to define a group of conditions common among older adults. These conditions are not connected to one specific disease, but are a group of clinical symptoms that lead to functional decline, frailty and poor quality of life. Pressure ulcers, incontinence, falls, functional decline and delirium are often considered the top five conditions of Geriatric Syndrome. But other conditions such as depression, decreased appetite or malnutrition are also commonly included.

Nurses caring for older adults should perform comprehensive geriatric assessments utilizing evidence-based practice protocols to manage common geriatric syndromes. The Harford Institute for Geriatric Nursing offers educational resources to aid nurses in identifying problems and developing comprehensive care plans to address these conditions. The Hartford Institute *Try This* series includes The Fulmer SPICES assessment tool which focuses on six of the conditions common to Geriatric Syndrome ([ConsultGeriRN.org](http://ConsultGeriRN.org)). Advance Care Excellence for Seniors (ACES) is also a framework for identifying and addressing conditions that lead to geriatric syndrome using an interdisciplinary approach.

Read the following article to learn more about Geriatric Syndromes:

- Geriatric Syndromes and Their Implications for Nursing

**Inappropriate Medication Use**

Older adults are often prescribed multiple medications to address a variety of health issues. Access the following website from The Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing and find information about medication management.

Read the information about Reducing Adverse Events on the ConsultGeriRN website:

- Standard of Nursing Practice Protocol: Reducing Adverse Drug Events

Review the following web page to see how to implement the criteria for choosing appropriate medications for older adults:
The Beers Criteria for Potentially Inappropriate Medication Use in Older Adults
2012 AGS Beers Criteria for Potentially Inappropriate Medication Use in Older Adults

Promoting Independence and Autonomy While Reducing Risk Factors in Older Adults

As a nurse, you are encouraged to promote healthy living in your patients. In order to assist the older adult, family, and caregivers to balance the need for autonomy and safety when making everyday decisions, you must first understand the unique challenges faced by older adults.

Safety and Vulnerabilities
You will identify safety issues and vulnerabilities that affect older adults and explore various ethical principles in relation to care in this population.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- **Competency 742.1.4: Promoting Independence and Autonomy While Reducing Risk Factors in Older Adults**
  The graduate recommends techniques to co-create health and illness management practices with older adults and their families (caregivers) that ensure safety and optimal maintenance of functional ability, taking into account patient characteristics and needs and patient and caregiver vulnerabilities as well as strengths.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Identify ethical principles for preserving autonomy while reducing risk in the care of older adults.
- Describe strategies for preventing morbidity and mortality associated with the use of physical and chemical restraints in older adults.
- Determine appropriate best practices to co-create a plan of care with the patient, family and other caregivers.
- Explain how you would assist older adults, families, and caregivers to balance the need for autonomy and safety when making everyday decisions.
- Apply ethical and legal principles to the complex issues that arise in the care of older adults.

Reading Assignment

Read the following chapter in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- chapter 17 Ethical/Legal Principles and Issues

**Ethical Exploration**

Complete the following items in your notebook:

- Define autonomy and self-determination.
- Nurses may face ethical dilemmas when they advocate for autonomy in the face of
being forced to comply with regulatory guidelines. Write a brief summary on how nurses can facilitate autonomy in elder patients.

- Another ethical issue of self-determination and autonomy is that of assisted suicide. Explore your thoughts on how self-determination conflicts with laws preventing assisted suicide of terminal patients. What are your thoughts on Oregon’s, Death with Dignity Act? Would your personal beliefs impact the care you provide?

- Assess the effectiveness of various steps taken to assist health professionals in recognizing and reporting suspected mistreatments of older adults.

**Physical Restraints**

Read the following article. List in your notebook other alternatives to restraint use for older adults and in what circumstances you would deem them necessary.

- **Physical Restraints**
- **Chemical Restraints**

Read the following article:

- **Chemical and physical restraint use in the older person**

How do you evaluate the validity of this article?

How will it affect the way you consider the use of medications for chemical restraint for your patients?

**Maximizing Strengths and Overcoming Vulnerabilities**

There are multiple concerns to consider when planning care for older adults.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- **Competency 742.1.4: Promoting Independence and Autonomy While Reducing Risk Factors in Older Adults**
  The graduate recommends techniques to co-create health and illness management practices with older adults and their families (caregivers) that ensure safety and optimal maintenance of functional ability, taking into account patient characteristics and needs and patient and caregiver vulnerabilities as well as strengths.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Identify appropriate principles of care commensurate with older adults' vulnerabilities and the frequency and intensity of care needs.
- Assess the effectiveness of various steps taken to assist health professionals in recognizing and reporting suspected mistreatment of older adults or abuse of resources.
- Recommend appropriate individualized care practices to eliminate the use of physical and chemical restraints in older adults.
- Recommend techniques to cocreate health practices of a given older adult and family to
address identified patient vulnerabilities.

Case Studies

Read the following case studies from the University Of Washington School of Medicine. Complete the questions for each case in your notebook.

- Restraint Use in the Elderly

Watch the following videos:

- Elder Mistreatment Assessment (39.19)
- Avoiding Restraints for Elderly Dementia Patients (41.35)

Promoting Health and Independence in Older Adults

This century reflects a time of change for nursing and the way nurses deliver health care to the population over the age of 65 years. Most of these individuals expect to have an active life in the community well into their seventh decade. Each decade of life past age 65 often brings with it acute illnesses and chronic conditions accompanied by increased disability. Nurses caring for older adults must advocate for and use new ways to provide care to these adults that promotes their quality of life.

Health Promotion

Healthy aging and the active promotion of the health of older people are becoming increasingly important in national policies. This section reviews appropriate evidenced-based standards, risk reduction, and disease prevention in older adults.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- Competency 742.1.5: Promoting Health and Independence in Older Adults
  The graduate selects appropriate evidence-based standards of health promotion, risk reduction, and disease prevention in older adult populations.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Explain how to facilitate older adults' active engagement and participation in their own healthcare.
- After discussing evidence-based health promotion activities, facilitate the development of health promotion goals with a given older adult.
- Analyze evidence-based research regarding risk reduction and disease prevention in older adults.

Healthy People 2010 Initiatives

Review the following website and select your geographic area to review data on the 14 key preventative services for older adults.

- CDC: Promoting Preventative Services for Adults 50-64
Answer the following questions in your notebook:

- Is your geographic location on target with the Healthy People 2010 initiatives?
- If not, what services are lacking? What could the potential barriers be that are causing that goal not to be met?
- As a health care professional, how would you motivate your patients to actively participate in their health care?

**Maintaining Functional Independence**

Health, personality, state-of-mind, and emotional, physical, and spiritual support all have a place in the adjustments one makes to the aging process. Although self-care and health promotion are indeed important in maintaining independence, aging and accompanying health factors often make this a very difficult period of life.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- **Competency 742.1.5: Promoting Health and Independence in Older Adults**
  The graduate selects appropriate evidence-based standards of health promotion, risk reduction, and disease prevention in older adult populations.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Describe strategies to enhance the physical and mental function of older adults.
- Identify common risk factors that contribute to functional decline in older adults.
- Identify the principles for improving functional ability and quality of life for the older adult.
- Articulate psychosocial interventions for maximizing a given older adult's quality of life.

**Promoting Independence in Later Life**

Read the following chapter in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- chapter 10 Promoting Independence in Later Life

Consider the value you place on your own level of independence. In your notebook, answer each of the following questions:

- What measures of independence would be most difficult for you to forfeit if you became increasingly disabled?
- What accommodations might you want in order to ease the transitions you would encounter?
- Do these values and wishes differ significantly from those of the elderly people you know?
- How can the rehabilitation process be used to restore independence and function to older adults?
- Compare the principles of functional ability and quality of life to the older adult
- Identify a specific healthcare policy that either promotes or hinders the independence or autonomy of an older adult. What barriers does this policy have?
• Does this policy have any noticeable gaps that would exclude a portion of older adults?

Healthy Behaviors

Read the following in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

• chapter 11 Promoting Healthy Aging

Complete the Case Study 11-1 on page 347.
Complete the Personal Reflections on page 349.

**Technology-Assisted Care of Older Adults**

Older adults’ choice and use of advanced medical technology is sometimes limited. You will learn about technology recommendations and the use of technology for older adults.

**Technology Innovations**

You will identify the major types of technology used to enhance older adults’ function, independence, and safety while contrasting the positive and negative consequences related to using assistive devices.

This topic addresses the following competency:

• **Competency 742.1.6: Technology-Assisted Care of Older Adults**
  The graduate collaborates with patients, families and the inter-professional team to select the appropriate application of technology to enhance older adults’ safety and independence.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

• Recognize the value of electronic health records to care coordination among older adults across various health care settings and providers.
• Identify the major types of assistive technology commonly used to enhance older adults’ function, independence, and safety.
• Explain the teaching methods for introducing an older adult patient to a new technology.

**Teaching Older Adults**

Read the following chapter in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

• chapter 9 Teaching Older Adults

In your notebook, respond to the following items:

• List common barriers to teaching older adults.
• How can these barriers be overcome?
• Explain the teaching methods you would use to introduce an older adult to a new technology.
• How would you evaluate that your teaching has been effective?
Assistive Technologies

Read the following in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- chapter 16 Using Assistive Technology to Promote Quality of Life for Older Adults

Complete the case study on page 570.

In your notebook, write your responses to the following scenario:

Mr. Brown is able to be discharged home and care for his wife:

- What websites would you use to help you identify community resources for Mr. and Mrs. Brown?
- Discuss the community resources suggested to Mr. Brown.
- What websites might be helpful for Mr. Brown in terms of education and social support for stroke and dementia?
- What assistive devices might you suggest for Mr. Brown?
- Where did you find information about this equipment and/or devices?
- How would you teach Mr. Brown about their use?

Technology Acceptance

You will focus on planning and evaluating the effectiveness of using assistive technologies. You will also look at specific teaching techniques to help older adults use assistive technologies.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- **Competency 742.1.6: Technology-Assisted Care of Older Adults**
  The graduate collaborates with patients, families and the inter-professional team to select the appropriate application of technology to enhance older adults' safety and independence.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Select appropriate communication technology to promote optimal transitions of care for older adults.
- Select cost-effective assistive technology to promote quality of life for older adults.
- Select strategies for collaborating with older adults, families, and caregivers on applying technology to enhance function, independence, and safety.
- Recommend steps to successfully introduce a new technology to an older adult in a given situation.
- Evaluate an older adult's response to a newly introduced assistive technology.

Cultural Impact on the Use of Technologies

Explore the following resources on Cultural Competency and Cultural Diversity to further your knowledge about these issues in Healthcare:
Ethnorgeriatrics and Cultural Competence for Nursing Practice
The Challenge of Serving and Working with Diverse Populations in American Hospitals
Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Tool

Examine the following resources to gain a better understanding of the impact the use of technologies has on healthcare and on cultural diversity in healthcare:

- Understanding the Impact of Health IT in Underserved Communities and those with Health Disparities
- The impact of health information technology on the quality of medical and health care: A systematic review
- Technologies to Help Older Adults Maintain Independence: Advancing Technology Adoption
- AHRQ Electronic Medical Records Systems

Address the following issues in your notebook:

- What does cultural diversity mean to you?
- How might cultural competency be recognized in nursing practice?
- How might cultural diversity affect educational issues when teaching older adults?
- How might cultural diversity affect the use or acceptance of technology or assistive devices?

Healthcare Systems and Health Policy

You will evaluate the effectiveness of the healthcare environment in providing care that maximizes the function and independence of older adults in accordance with individual patient characteristics and needs.

Healthcare Systems

The aging of the population will have a major impact on the organization and delivery of health care. Of particular importance will be the shift from acute to chronic illnesses and the likely growing shortage of health care workers, especially nurses and paraprofessionals.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- Competency 742.1.7: Healthcare Systems and Health Policy
  The graduate evaluates the effectiveness of the healthcare environment and the influence of health policy in providing care that maximizes the function and independence of older adults in accordance with individual patient characteristics and patient and family needs.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Explain the implications of an aging population for health policy.
- Compare the foundational principles, goals, and methods of identified government programs and other community health initiatives available to older adults.
• Identify community resources for older adults that facilitate autonomy and quality of life for a given scenario.

Geriatric Resources

Access the following video provided by Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing website:

• Geriatric Resources

Impact of the Aging Population

Read the following chapter in Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care:

• chapter 25 Trends That Impact Gerontological Nursing

Healthcare Policy and Reform

Society responds to needs in different ways. You will look at models for healthcare in the global economy, and how systems and policies affect nursing and older populations.

This topic addresses the following competency:

• Competency 742.1.7: Healthcare Systems and Health Policy
  The graduate evaluates the effectiveness of the healthcare environment and the influence of health policy in providing care that maximizes the function and independence of older adults in accordance with individual patient characteristics and patient and family needs.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

• Compare the opportunities and constraints of supportive living arrangements on the function and independence of older adults.
• Analyze healthcare trends related to the independence and autonomy of older adults.
• Analyze a given policy or legislative act that promotes or hinders the independence and autonomy of older adults.
• Compare the benefits and limitations of the major forms of reimbursement on the delivery of healthcare services to older adults, differentiating the roles of Medicare and Medicaid.
• Explain the elements of the triple aim of healthcare reform as reflected in the care of older adults.
• Evaluate the influence of payer systems on access, quality, and affordability of healthcare for older adults.

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA)

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was signed into law in 2010. The intention of the law is to:

• Eliminate lifetime limits for health insurance coverage for essential services.
• Eliminate the ability of insurance companies to rescind coverage.
• Provide free preventative care.
• Develop a prevention and public health fund.
• Increase access to affordable care, including a provision for preexisting conditions.
• Improve Quality and Reduce Risk.
• Improve drug discounts for Medicare recipients.
• Expand coverage for early retirees.
• Provide National preexisting-condition insurance plan to assist those individuals without coverage for at least 6 months due to a prior condition.
• Expand Medicaid and Medicare coverage for individuals under the age of 65 with income below poverty levels outlined in the Act.
• Reduce overall cost while maintaining coverage to those entitled to Medicare.
• Provide Medicare recipients with more options for long-term care, including primary care services in their homes rather than institutional care.
• Increase services that will impact the older population include providing wellness and prevention programs at no cost to the individual and prescription drug discounts.

Watch the Healthcare Systems and Health Policy video:

Note: To download this video, right-click the following link and choose Save as...: download video.

Read the following:

• Patient Protection and Affordability Act (PPAA)
• Medicare

Triple Aim

IHI Triple Aim is a three-prong approach to healthcare reform. Review the following website to develop your understanding of the Triple Aim framework.

• IHI Triple Aim Initiative

U.S. Resources for Older Adults

There are many online resources to help you understand Medicare and Medicaid programs. Information on government sites is most reliable. Review the following webpage for a quick overview:

• Medicare and Medicaid - FAQs

International Models for Health Care

Read the following chapter in Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care:

• chapter 19 Global Models of Health Care

Care Transitions
You will determine the needs of older adults and their families and caregivers to coordinate patient-centered, safe transitions of care.

**Transitions**
Older adults with multiple chronic conditions and complex therapies are particularly vulnerable to breakdowns in care as they transition between care settings.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- **Competency 742.1.8: Care Transitions**
  The graduate determines the needs of older adults and their families and caregivers in coordinating patient-centered, safe transitions of care that aim to assure the least restrictive care environment relative to strengths and vulnerabilities, and reduce unnecessary hospitalizations.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Recognize common errors related to the transition of care for older adults, such as inaccurate or absent medication reconciliation.
- Identify effective communication strategies to promote a safe transition of care for the older adult.
- Apply appropriate methods to evaluate the transition of an older adult to a new care environment.
- Determine the receiving caregiver’s knowledge of a given patient’s care needs when transitioning care.
- Apply multiple communication techniques that promote safe transition of care.
- Analyze the effectiveness of a transition in protecting older adults from harm in a given scenario.

**Interdisciplinary Team**

There are several different professionals involved with the health care for older adults. Transitions between these members require careful attention from all.

Read the following chapter in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*.

- chapter 20 The Interdisciplinary Team

In your notebook, complete the following case study in chapter 25 Trends That Impact Gerontological Nursing in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- case study 25-1 (page 786)

Record your thoughts about the following questions in your notebook:

- Have you ever worked with a team in any area?
- Have you ever worked with an interdisciplinary team in a health care setting?
• If so, how did you feel about that experience?
• If not, have you ever observed such a team in action?
• Which of the team members’ functions are you most familiar with?
• How do the viewpoints of different team members affect the outcome of the experience?
• How important to you in your future career is the opportunity to work within a well-functioning team?

Reflection

Older adults with multiple chronic conditions and complex therapies are particularly vulnerable to breakdowns in care as they transition between care settings.

Answer the following questions in your notebook:

• Describe your understanding and knowledge of the effects of a transition when an older adult transfers due to an exacerbation of a chronic condition, a decline in function, or other reasons between health care settings.
• What are the potential effects of a transition for family members or caregivers?
• What factors influence the positive or negative outcome of the transition process for the family or caregiver?

Care Transitions Model

Review the following article and presentation based upon the Care Transitions Model that has been implemented in several health care facilities:

• Care Transitions Model

What kind of impact do you see this having for patient care?
Is it realistic for this type of program to be implemented nationwide?

Knowledge Base for Improving Care Transitions

As befits such an important aspect of older patient care, a great deal of knowledge and understanding has been developed around care transitions.

This topic addresses the following competency:

• Competency 742.1.8: Care Transitions
  The graduate determines the needs of older adults and their families and caregivers in coordinating patient-centered, safe transitions of care that aim to assure the least restrictive care environment relative to strengths and vulnerabilities, and reduce unnecessary hospitalizations.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

• Identify common, preventable errors that occur related to the transition of care for older adults, such as inaccurate or absent medication reconciliation.
• Identify effective communication strategies to promote a safe transition of care for the
More Resources for the Care Transitions Model

Look through the following online resources for more information to help you implement a care transitions model:

- The Transitional Care Model
- Transitional Care Model
- Health Care Leader Action Guide to Reduce Avoidable Readmissions
- Discharge Preparation Checklist

Skills for Ensuring Safe Transitions

Ensuring older patients are safely transitioned can be a difficult task. It is important, then, that you develop skills in performing transitions.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- Competency 742.1.8: Care Transitions
  The graduate determines the needs of older adults and their families and caregivers in coordinating patient-centered, safe transitions of care that aim to assure the least restrictive care environment relative to strengths and vulnerabilities, and reduce unnecessary hospitalizations.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Apply appropriate methods to evaluate the transition of an older adult to a new care environment.
- Determine the receiving caregiver’s knowledge of a given patient’s care needs when transitioning care.
- Apply multiple communication techniques that promote safe transition of care.
- Analyze the effectiveness of a transition in protecting older adults from harm in a given scenario.

Skills for Ensuring Safe Transitions

Read the following chapter in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- chapter 23 The Gerontological Nurse as Manager and Leader

What role will nurses have in implementing programs to improve care?

Palliative Care and End-of-Life Care

Palliative care evolved from the hospice movement; health care providers embrace its philosophy of whole-person care for those persons with life-limiting illnesses.

Palliative Care

This topic addresses the following competency:
• **Competency 742.1.9: Palliative and End-of-life Care**

  The graduate collaborates with patients and families to support palliative care needs in order to reduce symptom burden and treatment fatigue and enhance quality of life, as well as end-of-life care that is compassionate, respectful, patient centered, and family supported.

This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Identify fundamentals of pain and symptom management in the palliative care of patients with chronic illness.
- Determine the needs and wishes of patients and families related to palliative care.

**End-of-Life Care**

Read the following in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- chapter 24 End-of-Life Care

In your notebook, address the following issues:

- What is the nurse's role on the inter-professional team regarding end of life care?
- Compare and contrast the goals of curative, palliative and hospice care.
- Contrast cultural, psychosocial and spiritual issues that affect end of life care.

**Death and Dying: A Simulation Exercise**

In your notebook, complete the following simulation and answer questions from Box 24-3 in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- Box 24-3 (page 752) from chapter 24 End-of-Life Care

**Resources on the Web**

Visit the following web page:

- Center to Advance Palliative Care

Investigate topics and resources that are of interest to you.

**End-of-Life Care**

End-of-life care requires special skills from nurses. Legal issues and cultural expectations may vary, but the ethics of empathetic care are always consistent.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- **Competency 742.1.9: Palliative and End-of-life Care**
  The graduate collaborates with patients and families to support palliative care needs in order to reduce symptom burden and treatment fatigue and enhance quality of life, as well as end-of-life care that is compassionate, respectful, patient centered, and family supported.
This topic addresses the following learning objectives:

- Recognize aspects of care, including pain and symptom management, as priorities that contribute to a dignified end-of-life experience.
- Identify legal and ethical standards related to end-of-life care.
- Describe effects of grief and mourning on older adults and their families.
- Determine the needs and wishes of patients nearing the end of life.
- Assess the availability of services and resources to provide comprehensive end-of-life care.
- Recommend appropriate interventions to facilitate the wishes of the dying and their families.

**Ethical and Legal Principles and Issues**

Review your notes or skim through the following in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- chapter 17 Ethical/Legal Principles and Issues

Review the following chapter in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- chapter 24 End-of-Life Care

Read the following article:

- Culturally Diverse Communities and End-of-Life Care

What are your personal choices for end-of-life care? How have your own choices and values affected the way you experience caring for others near the end of life?

**End of Life Care**

Read the NIH module on end-of-life-care:

- Providing Comfort at the End of Life

**AMNH: Genetics, Genomics, Genethics for Nursing**

Completion of the American Museum of Natural History focus on “Genetics, Genomics, Genethics for Nursing” can take up to four weeks. This certification is required for your assessment. When you finish your AMNH work, your score will be sent directly to WGU. Please save a copy of your final AMNH Certificate as it will be required in additional courses.

**AMNH “Genetics, Genomics, Genethics for Nursing”**

**Final Steps**
Congratulations on completing the activities in this course! This course has prepared you to complete the assessment associated with this course. If you have not already been directed to complete the assessment, schedule and complete your assessment now.