Introduction

Overview
As registered nurses you are aware of the many contemporary issues that you face in your practice today. These issues are complex and evolving as the demographics of our society and increased aging population continues to grow and change.

Nurses need to know how to approach end-of-life care, legal and ethical issues in healthcare, and patients with high acuity illness, such as multisystem failure. These three areas are current, highly impacted areas in healthcare today and ones that require continual updating, building on prior education, and experience.

Did you know that there is a growing need for nurses to be very well educated with a focus on the exciting field of genetics? Genetics is now known as the basis of many diseases. For example, breast cancer was previously thought to appear at random, but it can now be explained and even predicted through genetics and genetic testing. Nurses need to be able to help patients decide whether they want to be tested and what the ramifications of that testing will be. A second example deals with the controversial topic of stem cell research, which will impact nursing practice in the future as an ethical issue in the potential curing of disease. Third, families that have a history of genetic diseases must make decisions about testing during pregnancy and, if they choose to do the tests, how they will deal with the results?

In this course you will gain an understanding of, aspects of aging, safety, communication and placement for the older adult, genetics, advocacy and decision-making in genetics.

Watch the following introduction video for this course:

Competencies
This course provides guidance to help you demonstrate the following 4 competencies:

- **Competency 724.2.1: Homeostasis and Pain Management in Patient with Multisystem Failure**
  The graduate demonstrates the ability to assess homeostasis in multisystem failure and demonstrates the ability to manage pain in multisystem failure.

- **Competency 724.2.4: Safety, Communication, and Placement for the Older Adult**
  The graduate identifies safety issues associated with the older adult's living environment; facilitates communication with and assesses the care capacity of the older adult's family; and determines appropriate discharge placement for the older adult after illness or surgery.

- **Competency 724.2.5: Genetic Disease Diagnosis, Screening, and Treatment**
  The graduate demonstrates application and integration of the relationship of genetics
and genomics to health, prevention, screening, diagnostics, and selection of treatment
and analyzes personal, health, developmental, and physical histories that consider
 genetic, environmental, and genomic influences and risks.

- **Competency 724.2.6: Advocacy and Decision Making in Genetics**
  The graduate recognizes issues that affect the rights of clients relative to genetic and
genomic related decision making; provides clients appropriate information or resources
relative to genetic- and genomic-related decision making; and recognizes his or her own
attitudes and values related to genetics and genomics.

**Nursing Dispositions Statement**

Please review the [Statement of Nursing Dispositions](#).

**Course Instructor Assistance**

As you prepare to successfully demonstrate competency in this subject, remember that course
instructors 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 instructors are excited to hear from you and eager to work with you.

Successful students report that working with a course instructor is the key to their success.
Course instructors 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 instructors act as a support system to guide you through the revision process. You
should expect to work with course instructors for the duration of your coursework, and you are
encouraged to contact them as soon as you begin. Course instructors 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.

**Manually Enrolled Resources**

Take a moment to enroll in the learning resources listed in this section. To enroll, navigate to the
“Learning Resources” tab, click the “Sections” button, and then click the “Enroll Now” button
for each resource. Once your mentor approves your enrollment in the resource, you will receive
an e-mail with further access instructions. Contact your mentor if you have questions.

You may already have enrolled in these resources for other courses. Please check the
"Learning Resources" tab and verify that you have access to the following learning resources. If
you do not currently have access, please enroll or renew your enrollment at this time.

Note: For instructions on how to enroll or subscribe through the "Learning Resources" tab, please see the “Acquiring Your Learning Resources” page.

**AMNH Online Course**

To enroll in the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) "Genetics, Genomics, Genetics for WGU" online course, you must enroll through the Learning Resources tab. You will receive an e-mail with registration information from AMNH within several business days of requesting enrollment. Please check your junk/spam mail regularly, as the e-mails from AMNH frequently get caught there. This is a required, online, self-paced course.

Note: This course will take up to four weeks to complete so you need to begin this at the onset of this course. AMNH use is for 90 days and non-renewable.

**Automatically Enrolled Resources**

You can access the learning resources listed in this section by clicking on the links provided throughout the course. You may be prompted to log in to the WGU student portal to access the resources.

**VitalSource E-Texts**

The following textbooks are available to you as e-texts within this course of study. You will be directly linked to the specific readings required within the activities that follow.


You will be instructed throughout the geriatric portion of this course of study to go to the *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care companion website* to complete case studies and other activities that will help you to develop competency and apply what you have learned.

Note: These e-texts are available to you as part of your program tuition and fees, but you may purchase hard copies 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.

**Other Learning Resources**

You will use the following learning resources for this course.

**Nursing Standards**

You will be able to access Nursing Professional Standards as they apply to your program through the WGU Library. Please access these documents at the following website:

- [Nursing Standards E-Reserves](#)
Multiple Organ Dysfunction Syndrome

Consider this scenario:

An elderly man is admitted to the critical care unit after sustaining severe multiple injuries in a car accident. He is unconscious and there is concern that his systems may be failing. When you enter the room, you notice that the patient has an intravenous infusion going, and that the patient is attached to a cardiac monitor and a monitor to measure intracranial pressure. Although he is receiving intravenous fluids, you notice that he is not putting out urine. His catheter bag is empty, and his chart indicates his output has been less than 50 ccs in the last four hours. What is happening? What does this tell you about his internal organs' function?

These types of situations are all about homeostasis. You need to be able to spot changes in a critically ill patient's condition in order to support medical intervention in an acutely ill patient with altered organ function. Sometimes what you observe will be as obvious as this case of decrease urine output. In other cases, it may be something more subtle starting as a feeling you have that something is wrong. You will learn about complexities of caring for the aged with multiple organ dysfunction syndrome as it relates to professional practice decision making and assessment.

Multisystem Failure

Until now, you may have focused your practice on how illness affects one body system at a time.

This might be the case if you work on a surgical unit or a telemetry unit. You learned how acutely ill a patient can be after they have had a myocardial infarction, pneumonia, or a stroke. Now imagine how ill that patient would be if more than one body system were involved. The resources involved in caring for these types of patients are staggering, and the outcomes are often not very good. The activities associated with this subject will introduce you to the concepts of multisystem failure, basics of bioethics and complexities of care.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- **Competency 724.2.1: Homeostasis and Pain Management in Patient with Multisystem Failure**
  The graduate demonstrates the ability to assess homeostasis in multisystem failure and demonstrates the ability to manage pain in multisystem failure.

Concept Map: MODS

Make a concept map with as many things as you think are important causes and concerns in the body in multisystem organ failure (MODS). Consider these questions:

- What is multisystem failure?
- When does it occur and why?

Use the notes section of this course to document your answers.
Read the "Caring for Geriatric Patients with MODS" article on e-reserve at the WGU library.

**Laboratory Test Interpretation**

In your study notes, explain the rationale for lab tests used in the monitoring of the aging patient with MODS.

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

- pages 265–268 in chapter 8 ("Medications and Laboratory Values")

Complete the activities.

- What laboratory values can be expected to increase normally with age?
- What laboratory values can be expected to decrease normally with age?
- What drugs commonly used by the elderly may alter laboratory results?

**Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care**

Complete the following case study from the companion site for *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- Medications and Laboratory Values

You do not need to submit this case study. However, if you need feedback you can contact the course instructor. You can also discuss the case in the community with your peers. As you work through the case, refer to the chapter in your text for more information.

**Pain**

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

- pages 762–767 in chapter 24 ("End of Life Care")

Answer the questions following the Case Study 24-4 on page 764.

You do not need to submit this case study. However, if you need feedback you can contact the course instructor. You can also discuss the case in the community with your peers. As you work through the case, refer to the chapter in your text for more information.

**Final Concept Map: MODS**

Go back to your concept map and see if you can add more information about MODS.

**724.2.1-01-08 Performance Task**

Complete the following task in TaskStream:

- GNT1: 724.2.1-01-08

For details about this performance assessment, see the "Assessment" tab in this course.
Safety, Communication, and Placement for the Older Adult

An elderly male patient is about to be discharged home after a total hip replacement. However, what the discharging physician does not know is that the patient lives alone in an older, small, third-floor apartment in the city. The patient will be expected to get up the stairs to his apartment and care for himself. What safety issues does this suggest? Who will be the patient's voice in the discharge planning? The United States is a nation of people growing older. How does society view these members? What can the nurse provide to the family and patient in order to enhance communication and safety in the older adult?

You will learn about how pathophysiology in the older adult and nursing communication can impact the safety in the older adult.

Safety and Quality Care

The elderly man was discharged home after a total hip replacement. The community health nurse is asked to visit during the first week the patient is home. On assessment of the patient and his environment, he or she notes that there is little food in the house and multiple safety issues.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- **Competency 724.2.4: Safety, Communication, and Placement for the Older Adult**
  The graduate identifies safety issues associated with the older adult’s living environment; facilitates communication with and assesses the care capacity of the older adult’s family; and determines appropriate discharge placement for the older adult after illness or surgery.

Concept Map: Quality Care of the Elderly

Make a concept map on quality care of the elderly. Think especially about their unique needs for care in the home, in the hospital, and at discharge planning.

Nurse’s Role in Providing Safe Care to the Elderly

In your study notes, answer the following questions:

- What is the role of the nurse in providing safe care to hospitalized elderly patients?
- What assessment and advocacy responsibility does the nurse have when considering discharging an elderly patient?
- What physiological, psychological, cognitive, and functional factors impact on the safety of the elderly?
- What symptoms would make you suspect elder abuse in the hospitalized patient?
- When is it necessary to involve outside agencies to protect the elderly patient?
- What are the resources nurse can use?

Fall Risk and Prevention

Complete a "fall risk assessment" on an elderly individual. Use the following resources from chapter 14 ("Management of Common Problems") in the Mauk text, and then analyze your
findings:

- the Morse Fall Scale (p. 464)
- the Home Safety Checklist (p. 465)
- the Performance-Oriented Assessment of Gait (pp. 467-468)

Develop a plan to decrease the risk of falls for this individual.

For more information on fall risk and prevention, read pages 462-468.

Modify Concept Map: Quality Care of the Elderly

Change your concept map on quality care of the elderly as a result of your learning. Discuss what you have learned with your colleagues. Consider the following question:

- How have your perceptions of providing quality care to elderly patients changed?

Social Isolation

Often when an elderly people become ill, they find themselves isolated from family and friends because they do not want to cause others trouble. Elderly patients may not be able to be as active and mobile as they were before, which means they cannot participate in clubs or other social activities. What effect does this have on their recovery and quality of life?

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- Competency 724.2.4: Safety, Communication, and Placement for the Older Adult
  The graduate identifies safety issues associated with the older adult’s living environment; facilitates communication with and assesses the care capacity of the older adult’s family; and determines appropriate discharge placement for the older adult after illness or surgery.

Concept Map: Social Isolation in the Older Adult

Make a concept map on social isolation in the older adult using the following questions and prompts

- What is social isolation in the elderly?
- What health problems can be initiated or exacerbated by social isolation?
- Discuss the factors that could inhibit healthy communication for the elderly patient or person living at home.
- Could generational gaps inhibit communication with the elderly? If so, how?
- What medical problems could impede effective communication from an elderly person?

Case Study: Social Isolation in the Older Adult

Read the following case study:

- Nowhere to Turn
In your study notes answer these questions:

- What interventions would you suggest for this patient?
- How do health systems and health professionals inadvertently reinforce social isolation in the elderly?

Modify Concept Map: Social Isolation in the Older Adult

Reflect on your original conceptions about social isolation. Modify your initial concept map.

- Which of your ideas, if any, have changed?

Discharge Planning and Placement for the Older Adult

What should you do with parents or grandparents when they need care? This can be a challenging question fraught with indecisiveness and guilt. Placement and discharge planning for the older adult requires the support of the family, not only for the patient but for the family as well.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- Competency 724.2.4: Safety, Communication, and Placement for the Older Adult
  The graduate identifies safety issues associated with the older adult’s living environment; facilitates communication with and assesses the care capacity of the older adult’s family; and determines appropriate discharge placement for the older adult after illness or surgery.

Discharge Planning Diagram

Diagram the process of discharge planning that you presently use with elderly patients. Then, answer the following questions in your notes.

- Has this type of discharge planning been effective or not? Explain.
- If not, what would you like to change?

Promoting Independence in Later Life

Complete the following case study from the companion site for Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care:

- Promoting Independence Later in Life

You do not need to submit your answers unless you need feedback from your course instructor. Share your insights with your peers in the community

For more information on promoting independence in later life, see chapter 10 ("Promoting Independence Later in Life") in the Mauk text.
Determining Proper Discharge Placement

Access the following:

- Hospitalmedicine.org: Getting Ready to Go Home

Perform some of these assessments on an elderly person you know, and record the results. What did you learn?

Educating Family on Discharge Planning

Access the following:

- Hospitalmedicine.org: Clinical Toolbox for Geriatric Care

Since Ms. Young has no family, how will you proceed to make an appropriate discharge plan for her so she will be supported in the community?

Promoting Healthy Aging

Complete the following case study from the companion site for Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care:

- Promoting Healthy Aging

You do not need to submit your answers unless you need feedback from your course instructor. Share your insights with your peers in the community.

For more information on promoting health aging, see chapter 11 ("Promoting Healthy Aging") in the Mauk text.

Modify Discharge Planning Diagram

Modify your diagram as a result of your learning. Describe major changes, if any.

Were there any surprises? If so discuss with your colleagues.

Biopsychosocial Aspects of Aging

Aging means different things to different people. Health, quality of life, and family relationships can have an impact on how people live their later years. The role of the nurse in caring for the elders within a society can be a truly gratifying one.

Changes Associated With Aging

Are graying hair, thinning skin, and loss of memory the aging process? There are many changes associated with aging that affect how elderly people react during illness. This includes issues that are social, psychological, and physical in nature. How can nurses impact these changes in the patients for whom nurses care?

Concept Map: Biopsychosocial Aspects of Aging
Draw a concept map regarding what you perceive to be the physiological, cognitive, and psychological changes associated with aging.

**Sensorimotor Changes**

Complete the following case study from the companion site for *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- Aging Changes That Affect Communication

You do not need to submit this case study. However, if you need feedback you can contact the course instructor. You can also discuss the case in the community with your peers. As you work through the case, refer to the chapter in your text for more information.

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

- chapter 4 ("Aging Changes that Affect Communication")

Add information on sensorimotor changes to your concept map. Consider the following questions:

- Can you think of causal chains you can show in the concept map for sensorimotor change?
- What causes it?
- How do multiple medications affect it?

**Assessment of the Older Adult**

Complete the following case study from the companion site for *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- Assessment of the Older Adult

Submit your answers to the course instructor if you need feedback.

Otherwise, check your answers by reviewing chapter 7 ("Assessment of the Older Adult"), page 232, in your text and then discuss with your peers in the community.

**Modify Concept Map: Biopsychosocial Aspects of Aging**

Return to your concept map and reflect on the simulation experience and make any necessary modifications.

**Cognitive Changes in Elderly Patients**

Many elderly individuals remain cognitively intact, quick and active. However, some elderly people seem to decline in cognitive ability as they age. It is important to assess the cognitive level of your elderly patients to ensure that proper care and instructions are provided.

**Concept Map: Cognitive Changes in the Elderly**
Make a concept map on cognitive changes in the elderly. Use the following questions to help you:

- How would you determine normal versus pathological cognition in elderly patients?
- How do common medications affect cognition in the elderly patient?
- How do you assess cognition?

**Alzheimer's Disease**

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

- pages 533–541 in chapter 15 ("Nursing Management of Dementia")

Complete the activities:

- Discuss common pathological changes in elderly cognition and post your thoughts on the message board.
- Note the stages of Alzheimer's disease and possible nursing interventions for each stage using the notes section of the web enabled course, your own notebook, or the message board.

Discuss the impact of cognitive changes on patient and family especially in the case of Alzheimer's.

Construct a brief care plan for the hospitalized Alzheimer's patient.

In your study notes, answer the following question:

- How can pathological changes in elderly cognition be interpreted or misinterpreted by health care providers?

**Case Study: Alzheimer's Disease**

Read Case Study 25-1 on Norma at the following page in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- page 785 in chapter 25 ("Trends That Impact Gerontological Nursing")

In your study notes, answer the questions at the end of the chapter. This will help you focus on the needs and nursing care of a patient with Alzheimer's.

**Nursing Management of Dementia**

Complete the following crossword from the companion site for Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care:

- **Nursing Management of Dementia**

This is a good way to test your knowledge. If you have difficulty, go back to the chapter pages
on dementia and review.

**Modify Concept Map: Cognitive Changes in the Elderly**

Return to your concept map and make any necessary modifications based on the material you have studied.

**Polypharmacy in Elderly Patients**

Polypharmacy has an important impact on the pharmacological care of the elderly. Elderly people often have many prescriptions that have been prescribed by multiple doctors and that may be filled at different pharmacies, which adds to the risk for adverse drug interactions. The nurse should be aware of strategies to help prevent these risks.

**Concept Map: Polypharmacy**

Make a concept map on polypharmacy. Use the following questions and prompts to help you:

- What is the meaning of the word *polypharmacy*?
- Discuss what is meant by polypharmacy in the elderly patients.
- Is polypharmacy different within other age groups?
- What physiological, psychological, and social factors may contribute to polypharmacy in the elderly?
- How does alcohol consumption relate to polypharmacy in the elderly?

**Recognition and Prevention of Polypharmacy**

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

- pages 455–461 in chapter 14 (“Management of Common Problems”)

In your study notes, answer all the questions related to both cases.

- What other physiological or cognitive changes can contribute to polypharmacy? Give examples.
- What insights did you gain after performing these exercises?

**Teaching Plan**

Access the following:

- [American Diabetes Association: Polypharmacy in Elderly Patients With Diabetes](#)

Complete the following activities after reading the "Polypharmacy in Elderly Patients With Diabetes" article at the website above.

- Develop a simple patient teaching plan for an elderly patient about polypharmacy.
- Use the plan with an elderly patient and assess the results of learning.

Discus your insights with two other nurses either in the workplace or with other colleagues.
In your study notes, respond to the following questions:

- Has your perception of the prevalence of polypharmacy in the elderly changed? Discuss.
- What insights have you gained? How will you put them into practice?

**Modify Concept Map: Polypharmacy**

Go back to your initial concept map on polypharmacy and add to or revise it.

**Communication and Care of Patient With End of Life Issues and Death**

In this section, you will learn about advance directives, informed consent, and malpractice, and the special needs of patients and families during end-of-life care. Think of recent cases in the news—have you heard about doctor-assisted suicide and the right to die a natural death? You need to be highly aware of your role in providing patient advocacy when these issues arise in practice, which will be almost every day. As a nurse, you will also need to be able to separate personal preferences and values from those of the patients you serve when serving as a patient advocate.

**End-of-Life Issues**

End-of-life issues involve more than just the patient. While it is important to provide safe palliative care for a patient who is dying, it is equally important to care for the family. They will have questions and concerns about what care should be provided and how it should be provided. The family may even feel guilt over their decisions. You will often be the person on the scene who must deal with the day-to-day questions and concerns of the family.

**Concept Map: End-of-Life Issues**

Make a concept map for End of Life Issues using the following questions:

- When does nursing care change to end-of-life or comfort care? Explain.
- How would you describe palliative care?

**Study Note Questions**

In your study notes, respond to the following questions:

- What is the definition of *advance directives*?
- Do advance directives differ from living wills and power of attorney? Explain.
- Discuss health care proxies.
- What are some legal and ethical implications regarding DNR/DNI orders?
- What is an AND order? Is it legal in every state?
- What is the Patient Self Determination Act (PSDA) and how does it apply to EOL issues?

**Case Study: Medical Ethics**
Access the following:

- **Treating Ed: A Medical Ethics Case Study**

The case at this website is designed to help you consider the ramifications of advance directives and durable powers of attorney in making medical decisions. Specifically, you will explore which rights and responsibilities (regarding durable powers of attorney and other advance directive paperwork) are with the medical professional and which rights are with the patient or the patient's representatives.

You will need to investigate the following terms as you complete this case:

- Durable power of attorney
- Living will
- Advance directive

Go to the case and read the case scenario. Then answer this question in your study notes:

- What have you discovered new about patient rights, medical professional responsibilities, and the need for advanced directives?

*Postscript: Ed did indeed develop pneumonia, and the complications from his directives described in the case are approximately what actually happened. Given Ed's insistence that he did not want intubation and the doctor's opinion that he would almost certainly need to be sedated and ventilated for the remainder of his life, the family chose not to pursue aggressive treatment. He died from pneumonia complications the next day.*

**Dialoguing With Families About End-of-Life Issues**

Families go through intensely difficult times when faced with end-of-life issues. The ability to dialogue empathically is paramount. If the nurse cannot provide such support, the physical care means little.

**Dialogue: End-of-Life Issues**

In your study notes, create a dialogue on how you would approach end-of-life issues with family members. Practice with a colleague.

**Communicating about End-of-Life**

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

- pages 748–750 in chapter 24 ("End of Life Care")

You will also find valuable information in this chapter about advanced directives.

**Modify Concept Map: End-of-Life Issues**

Go back to your original concept map. Add new information and make modifications or new connections. Consider the following question:
Have your views on advance directives changed?

**Palliative Care**

If someone you loved were dying, what would you most want for that person? Most people would like to know that their loved one is as comfortable as possible and is treated with respect and safe care. When there is not any further treatment for a patient, palliative care can provide this level of care without other heroic measures.

In this section you will focus on what palliative care is, how you will engage in palliative care, and how you can deal with the family during this palliative care.

**Concept Map: Palliative Care**

Create a concept map about palliative care. As you do so, consider the following questions:

- What is meant by palliative care?
- Give examples of patient care scenarios that could benefit from the palliative care approach.
- Draw a concept map with all the elements you believe contribute to effective palliative care.
- What is the paradigm shift required when transitioning from acute care to palliative care?
- Is there a difference between palliative care and home healthcare?
- How does the nurse help the family choose the appropriate end-of-life care with or for the patient?

**Principles of Palliative Care**

Access the following:

- [Principles of Palliative Care](#)

Read the "Principles of Palliative Care" article.

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

- page 751 in chapter 24 ("End of Life Care")

Specifically focus on the sections describing the five wishes and "Allow Natural Death" (AND). As you do so, consider the following question:

- What should conversations about the five wishes and the five hard choices include?

Read case study 24-1 in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- page 754 in chapter 24 ("End of Life Care")

Then complete the following in your study notes:
Write a short care plan, prioritizing the care for this patient using the Nursing Process.

Respond to this question:

- What are the some major nursing diagnoses used for palliative care patients?

Compare your work with the algorithm for choosing proper end-of-life provider in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- page 759 in chapter 24 ("End of Life Care")

**Case Study: End-of-Life Care**

Read case study 24-2 in *Gerontological Nursing: Competencies for Care*:

- page 755 in chapter 24 ("End of Life Care")

Draw a small concept map regarding your feelings and perceptions about the possibility of patient addiction to pain killers during end-of-life care.

- Describe a situation in your practice where you encountered this dilemma. How did you handle it?
- Were you satisfied with the outcome of the case study?

**Modify Concept Map: End-of-Life Issues**

Go back to your original concept map on end-of-life issues. Add new information and make modifications or new connections. Consider the following question:

- What practices, if any, would you like to change as a result of your learning about palliative care?

**Communication With Patients at the End of Life**

It is important that you develop effective communication skills in addressing sensitive topics with patients and their families. This includes such topics as dealing with anxiety, providing palliative care, and understanding advanced directives, end-of-life issues, and death. These are difficult topics for the nurse, the patient, and the family. However, effective communication can provide great relief for the patient and family.

**Concept Map: Communication**

Make a concept map about communication with family of patients at the end of their life using the following questions:

- Describe your approach to communicating with patients and families during the end-of-life process in the past.
- Describe a situation that you felt was effective for all involved. What made it so?
- Describe a situation you felt was not so effective. What could have been done differently?
Communication Techniques

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

- box 24-1 ("There's an Elephant in the Living Room") in chapter 24 ("End of Life Care")

Complete these activities in your study notes:

- Describe a situation where this phenomenon seemed present with a dying patient.
- After reading the section, compare your own practices to those cited in the literature as being most effective and discuss your responses with your colleagues.

Modify Concept Map: Communication

Go back to your original models and add new information, make modifications, or new connections

724.2.4-01-07 Performance Task

Complete the following task in TaskStream:

- GNT1: 724.2.4-01-07

For details about this performance assessment, see the "Assessment" tab in this course.

Genetics

Are you predestined to contract certain illnesses? Do you have relatives with breast cancer, heart disease, or diabetes or children with birth defects? What role does a person's genetic makeup have in the expression of certain diseases? As a nurse working in today's healthcare system, it is important for you to understand the underlying basis of disease. Genetics provides insights into how disease begins, and it also raises the issue of ethics.

You will learn about how genetic factors can impact present and future health of patients and your responsibility in caring for such patients.

Understanding Genetics, Genomics, and Genethics

In order to understand how genetics affects health and illness, it is important for the nurse to have a solid foundation in the science of genetics. This means understanding Mendel to designer genes and genetically engineered food.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- Competency 724.2.5: Genetic Disease Diagnosis, Screening, and Treatment
  The graduate demonstrates application and integration of the relationship of genetics and genomics to health, prevention, screening, diagnostics, and selection of treatment and analyzes personal, health, developmental, and physical histories that consider genetic, environmental, and genomic influences and risks.

Concept Map: Genetics
What do you know now about genetics? Have you ever taken a genetics course in college? Maybe genetics is all new to you.

Make a concept map that shows what you know right now about genetics. As you complete the AMNH course online, add to your concept map.

**AMNH: Genetics, Genomics, Genethics-Week 1**

The AMNH online course is designed to give you a good foundation in genetics, genomics, and genethics. The course is designed to be an independent study that is self-paced. It consists of six parts that include simulations, activities, readings, and a final project. It is important to pace your completion of the six parts in order to have time to develop competency.

You are encouraged to engage in the discussions with your peers. However, this is optional. Discussions are geared to help you apply principles in the course to nursing.

Complete the following in the "Genetics, Genomics, Genethics" AMNH online course:

- ("Introduction")

Follow the online directions to access the components of the course.

**Expectations:**

- Review the course orientation.
- Determine the difference between genetics and genomics.
- Trace Gregor Mendel's work as the father of genetics, and become familiar with Mendel's basic tenets.
- Examine basic principles of inheritance such as autosomal dominant, autosomal recessive, sex-linked, and complex traits.
- Begin to build an organizational structure for thinking about ethical issues.
- Respond to the "Discussion Question: Mendel and Genetic Inheritance".
- Respond to the "Discussion Question: Genetic Basis for Disease".

**AMNH: Genetics, Genomics, Genethics-Week 2**

Complete the following in the "Genetics, Genomics, Genethics" AMNH online course:

- ("Nature vs. Nurture")
- "The Human Genome"

**Expectations:**

- Examine the "cooperation" between one's genes and one's environment.
- Learn how studies of twins tease out the impact of the environment on traits.
- Analyze what determines the evolution of a species.
- Examine the pros and cons of gene technology in agriculture.
• Trace the history of the genetic modification of plants.
• Respond to the "Discussion Question: Nature vs. Nurture"
• Respond to the "Discussion Question: Family Genetic History"
• Learn about the Human Genome Project.
• Recognize the elements that comprise a genome.
• Trace the genetic discoveries and the development of molecular lab techniques from the 1940s to the present.
• Become familiar with the molecular laboratory techniques used for extracting, sequencing, and analyzing DNA sequences.
• Respond to the "Discussion Question"

Note that there is no quiz required for this course.

Optional Assignment:

• Complete the "Assignment: GM Foods-Part 1".

As you continue to work through the AMNH course, pay particular attention how genetic traits are passed from parent to child and your role in genetic histories and counseling.

**Genetic History and Physical Assessment**

Now that you know there are genetically inherited diseases and genetic predisposition to diseases, how do you investigate the patient's risk? What is a genetic history and physical assessment?

Learn how you can use genetic mapping to track a patient's risk of genetic disease.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

• **Competency 724.2.5: Genetic Disease Diagnosis, Screening, and Treatment**
  The graduate demonstrates application and integration of the relationship of genetics and genomics to health, prevention, screening, diagnostics, and selection of treatment and analyzes personal, health, developmental, and physical histories that consider genetic, environmental, and genomic influences and risks.

**Concept Map: Mapping Family Genetic Histories**

Make a concept map about family genetic histories. As you do so, consider the following questions:

• How do you map a family's genetic history?
• Are there special symbols used that are universal?
• If so, how would this help professionals keep track of genetic trends?

**Advocacy/Decision Making in Genetics**

The activities associated with this subject will introduce you to your responsibility as a nurse in advocating for patients who have actual or potential genetic diseases. You will need these skills
and knowledge in order to help care for these patients.

**Issues Affecting Decision Making about Genetic Testing/Care**

Consider the following scenario:

A female patient has a family history of breast cancer. She is trying to decide whether to have genetic testing done to determine her risk. However, what will happen with her insurance if she does have a genetic marker? Will she be covered for care if she develops cancer?

There are many issues that affect decisions patients have to make about genetic testing and care.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- **Competency 724.2.6: Advocacy and Decision Making in Genetics**
  
  The graduate recognizes issues that affect the rights of clients relative to genetic and genomic related decision making; provides clients appropriate information or resources relative to genetic- and genomic-related decision making; and recognizes his or her own attitudes and values related to genetics and genomics.

**Concept Map: Decisions About Genetic Testing**

Make a concept map of what you know right now about genetic testing. As you do so, consider the following questions:

- What decisions do people have to make about genetic testing?
- What legal and ethical implications are related to these decisions?

**AMNH: Genetics, Genomics, Genethics-Week 3**

Complete the following in the "Genetics, Genomics, Genethics" AMNH online course:

- ("Applications of the Human Genome Project")

**Expectations:**

- Recognize tools used for measuring gene activity.
- Consider the problems of handling, using, and understanding the enormous amounts of data generated by the Human Genome Project.
- Explore the idea of differences between genomes, and genetic variation within humans.
- Recognize important genetic similarities and differences and the implications of these constants and variations.
- Respond to the "Discussion Question".

**Case Study: Cystic Fibrosis**

Access the following:

- Sciencecases.org: "Sometimes It Is All in the Genes"
Read the scenario at the website above. You might want to do this case study with some peers so you can discuss it as you go.

Go to part II ("Sharing the Bad News"). Read the scenario, answer the questions in your study notes, and discuss the information and your impressions with your peers.

Go to part III ("The Decisions Become Tougher"). Read the scenario, answer the questions in your study notes, and discuss the information and your impressions with your peers:

- Are the answers hard?
- Do you think it is difficult for the patient?

Go to part IV ("A New Hope or a False Hope?"). Read the scenario, answer the questions in your study notes, and discuss the information and your impressions with your peers:

- What do you think the patient should do?

**Nursing Support in Making the Decision**

In your study notes, answer the following questions:

- Who else do you think would be helpful to a family having to make a decision about carrying, caring for, or raising a child with a genetic defect?
- What is the nurse's role in this process?
- How can you support a parent's decision?

**Concept Map: Decisions About Genetic Testing**

Go back to your initial concept map and make additions or modifications. Consider the following questions:

- Are your ideas any different now about genetic testing?
- Were the decisions hard to make?

**Legal and Ethical Issues Related to Genetics**

A male patient finds out he has a genetic defect that could be passed to his infant. Should he go ahead and take the risk of having children?

A female patient has a strong family history of breast cancer. Should she have genetic testing? What legal and ethical implications are related to decisions surrounding genetics?

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- **Competency 724.2.6: Advocacy and Decision Making in Genetics**
  The graduate recognizes issues that affect the rights of clients relative to genetic and genomic related decision making; provides clients appropriate information or resources relative to genetic- and genomic-related decision making; and recognizes his or her own attitudes and values related to genetics and genomics.
Graphic: Beliefs and Attitudes

Make a computer-generated or hand-drawn graphic to depict your own attitudes and beliefs about the legal and ethical issues related to genetics.

- What legal and ethical issues arise when you are dealing with genetics and genetic testing?
- What do you already know about stem cell research, genetic engineering, and genetic manipulation?

AMNH: Genetics, Genomics, Genethics-Week 4

Complete the following in the "Genetics, Genomics, Genethics" AMNH online course:

- ("Ethical Issues of Reshaping Our World")

Expectations:

- Learn about the ethical issues that arise as knowledge of one's genome increases.
- Reflect on possible uses and abuses of the new genetic technology.
- Investigate the differences between cure and genetic enhancement in humans.
- Review the techniques used in cloning.
- Examine the pros and cons of increasing life spans.
- Complete the "Assignment: Parkinson's Disease”.
- Respond to the "Discussion Question: Cure and Enhancement”.

Case Study: Embryo Design

Access the following:

- Selecting the Perfect Baby: The Ethics of "Embryo Design"
- Selecting the Perfect Baby (References)

Consider the following story:

In 1994, Jack and Lisa Nash had a daughter, Molly, who inherited a rare genetic disorder called Fanconi anemia. By having another child with specific genetic markers, the Nash family could utilize stem cells from the new baby's umbilical cord blood to effectively cure Molly. Their search for doctors to provide this type of pre-implantation genetic diagnosis and treatment was controversial. Screening their embryos to eliminate the genetic disorder in a second child was not the problem. The controversial step was to eliminate some healthy embryos and implant only those that matched Molly's needs. Eventually they were successful in obtaining the treatment. Molly now has a little brother whose umbilical cord blood was used to treat her. Currently, she appears to be doing fine.

Read "Selecting the Perfect Baby: The Ethics of 'Embryo Design.'" In your study notes, answer the questions found at the end of the article.
“Selecting the Perfect Baby (References)” includes links to news accounts of the Nash case. 

**Modify Concept Map: Genetics**

Review what you have learned in your AMNH course and how your ideas, beliefs and models have change throughout this course. What questions do you still have?

Go back to your original concept map on genetics and modify or add to it. Be sure you thoroughly understand all concepts.

**724.2.5-03-04, 07-08, 2.6-01-09 Performance Task**

Complete the following task in [TaskStream](#):

- GNT1: 724.2.5-03-04, 07-08, 2.6-01-09

For details about this performance assessment, see the "Assessment" tab in this course.

**Final Steps**

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

**The WGU Library**

The WGU Library

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For more information about using the WGU Library, view the following videos on [The WGU Channel](#):

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Feedback

WGU values your input! If you have comments, concerns, or suggestions for improvement of this course, please submit your feedback using the following form:

- [Course Feedback](#)