

Clinical Medicine III Fall 2006 Geriatric Unit Objectives

Goal

The overall goal of the geriatric unit is to provide the foundation for competent, compassionate care of older patients. This foundation includes attitudes and knowledge that are needed to care for older people.

Objectives

I. Attitudes

- Awareness of the various myths and stereotypes related to older people.
- Recognition that ageism, like racism, affects all levels and aspects of society including health professions and can adversely affect optimal care of elderly patients.
- Recognition of the heterogeneity of older persons--a diverse group with different personalities, different values, different functional levels, and different medical illnesses. Thus, each person needs to be viewed as an individual regardless of chronological age and to be cared for in a unique fashion.
- Openness and willingness to work with other disciplines in caring for older patients.
- Self-awareness of the students' personal attitudes towards their own aging, disability, and death.
- Compassion and understanding attitude on the part of the provider for care givers of the frail elderly and the difficulties they face.
- An appreciation of the need for improving and optimizing function for older people, rather than just focusing on diseases.

II. Knowledge

A. Demographics & Epidemiology of Aging

1. Describe the demography and epidemiology of aging including the growth in numbers of older people and heterogeneity of the older population.

B. Biologic & Physiologic Aspects of Aging

1. Discuss the theories of aging including biochemical/molecular, cellular, genetic, and biopsychosocial.
2. Describe "normal" aging versus diseases at the molecular, cellular, tissue, and organism levels.
 - a. "Normal" aging is heterogeneous affecting different tissues and organs in different individuals at different rates.
 - b. Preventable, reversible, and treatable aging processes need to be identified by practitioners and managed accordingly.
 - c. Loss of homeostatic control mechanisms may account for much of the aging process.
3. Describe the pathology associated with normal aging and age associated disease processes.
4. Describe the physiology of aging in various organ systems.

C. Geriatric Syndromes & Conditions

1. Identify common geriatric syndromes and conditions and have a basic understanding of risk factors, causes, signs, symptoms, differential diagnosis, initial diagnostic evaluation, and preventive strategies of the following:
 - a. Immobility and gait disturbances
 - b. Pressure Ulcers
 - c. Incontinence
 - d. Falls
 - e. Osteoporosis
 - f. Iatrogenesis, include consequences of hospitalization & bed rest
 - g. Alterations in the special senses including hearing and vision impairment
 - h. Failure to thrive
 - i. Non-specific presentation of disease

D. Common Diseases & Disorders in Elderly Patients

1. Review the pathophysiology, presenting signs and symptoms, differential diagnosis, and initial diagnostic evaluation for common diseases in older people.
*** Note: Since these disorders have been covered in previous Clinical Medicine units, the emphasis of this topic is to explore the aspects unique to elderly patients.*
 - a. Rheumatological diseases (e.g. osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, temporal arteritis/polymyalgia rheumatica)
 - b. Genito-urological diseases (e.g. benign prostatic hyperplasia, sexual dysfunction)
 - c. Neurological diseases (e.g. Parkinson's disease, stroke and transient ischemic attack, dizziness/syncope)
 - d. Cardiovascular diseases (e.g. congestive heart failure, atrial fibrillation, valvular heart disease), hypertension (diastolic and systolic)
 - e. Endocrinological diseases (e.g. type 2 diabetes mellitus, hyperosmolar non-ketotic coma, hyper- and hypothyroidism, Paget's disease of the bone)
 - f. Cancer of various organs, including: breast, lung, colon, prostate, and hematologic malignancies
 - g. Infections, including: pneumonia, tuberculosis, and urinary tract
 - h. Renal diseases (e.g. fluid and electrolyte disturbances)
 - i. Gastroenterological disorders (e.g. constipation, diverticulitis, diverticulosis)

E. Psychosocial Issues of Aging

1. Describe the identification, presenting signs and symptoms, and appropriate referral of common psychosocial problems and issues in the elderly, including:
 - a. Normal behavioral late life changes, including retirement
 - b. Under-reporting of symptoms and illnesses
 - c. Sexuality and aging
 - d. Elder abuse and neglect
 - e. Home safety
 - f. Community resources, including those used to prevent institutionalization
 - g. Adaptation to care in alternative living situations, including long-term care facilities

F. Mental Health Issues in the Elderly

1. Identify common mental health concerns in the elderly and have a basic understanding of pathophysiology, presenting signs and symptoms specific to the elderly population, differential diagnosis, and initial diagnostic evaluation and treatment for common mental health disorders in older people. *** Note: Since these disorders have been covered in previous Clinical Medicine units, the emphasis of this topic is to explore the aspects unique to elderly patients.*
 - a. Depression
 - b. Dementia
 - c. Delirium
 - d. Sleep Disorders
 - e. Psychopathology, including: affective disorders, psychotic disorders, anxiety disorders, responses to medical illness, depression, and substance abuse
 - f. Suicide

G. Eldercare & End of Life Issues

1. Describe the different options for placements for elderly patients no longer able to care for themselves independently.
2. Discuss team care as it applies to the elderly patient.
3. Describe advance directives.
4. Understand the process of death and dying in our society.
5. Recognize perspectives on Eldercare and death and dying across cultures.
6. Discuss the indications for hospice care.
7. Identify approaches to management of the terminal elderly patient.

H. Geriatric Pharmacotherapy & Pain Management in the Elderly

1. Describe how pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics may be altered in the elderly patient.
2. Discuss the impact of altered pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics on therapeutic decisions.
3. Identify medications to avoid in the elderly patient.
4. Describe the risks associated with polypharmacy in the elderly patient.
5. Describe pharmacotherapy principles in the elderly patient.
6. Discuss general principles of pain management in the elderly patient.

I. Geriatric Nutrition

1. Understand changing nutritional needs associated with aging.
2. Recognize disease processes that are impacted by nutritional status.
3. Identify risks for malnutrition in the elderly patient.

J. Health Promotion & Disease Prevention in the Elderly

1. Describe primary prevention for elderly patients; for example, exercise, nutrition, and psychosocial interventions designed to maximize function to allow independent living.
2. Discuss secondary prevention with age appropriate screening for diseases and identification of geriatric syndromes.
3. Identify tertiary prevention strategies; for example, rehabilitation and chemoprophylaxis in the post-myocardial infarction patient.

K. Geriatric Assessment

1. Define comprehensive geriatric assessment (CGA).
2. Be familiar with the concept of geriatric evaluation and management units (GEMU's).
3. Describe the basic elements of geriatric assessment with standardized methods for assessing physical, cognitive, emotional and social functioning as appropriate. Specific examples include: screening examinations for mental status, geriatric depression, and functional status including activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living.
4. Discuss geriatric physical diagnosis skills, including: mobility assessment, gait and balance assessment, recognizing normal versus abnormal signs of aging, and pre-operative assessment.

Portions adapted from Areas of Basic Competency for the Care of Older Patients for Medical and Osteopathic Schools, American Geriatrics Society, 1998.