



THE GERONTOLOGICAL COMPETENCIES FOR ACCREDITED BACCALAUREATE NURSING PROGRAM

The U.S. Census Bureau reported an aging population of 55.8 million, which is approximately 17% of the population according to the 2020 Census (Caplan, 2023). By 2030, that number is expected to increase to 64 million older adults, or 21% of the population (Gilford, 1988). Only approximately 15,000 of 2.5 million registered nurses have certified training in geriatric care (Ornstein, n.d.). According to Stevens et al. (2011), only 3-8% of nursing students desire to work in geriatric care after graduating. Given this dramatic increase, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) has stressed the importance of increasing the number of nurses with competency of nurses in geriatric care (Bednash et al., 2011). Despite the desperate need for nurses with gerontological expertise and knowledge, the great majority of nursing education programs do not require classes in geriatrics, thereby creating a gap in students' knowledge about older adults (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2023). Moving forward, nursing programs need to invest more resources into expanding geriatric curriculum and innovation to change health care priorities and practice patterns. (Bednash et al., 2011).

The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) requires all baccalaureate programs to follow competencies from The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice (CCNE, 2018), including the following gerontological competencies:

- Recognize the impact of attitudes, values, and expectations on the care of the very young, frail older adults, and other vulnerable populations.
- Manage the interaction of multiple functional problems affecting patients across the lifespan, including common geriatric syndromes.
- Implement holistic, patient-centered care that reflects an understanding of human growth and development, pathophysiology, pharmacology, medical management, and nursing management across the health-illness continuum, across the lifespan, and in all healthcare settings.
- Provide appropriate patient teaching that reflects developmental stage, age, culture, spirituality, patient preferences, and health literacy considerations to foster patient engagement in their care. (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2008)

In addition, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) published recommended gerontological competencies for baccalaureate nursing students. Researchers have examined how nursing programs in the United States have implemented gerontological competencies from accreditation documents, into their curricula (Burbank et al., 2006; Kennedy-Malone et al., 2006; Kohlenberg et al., 2007). Best practices for implementing these competencies into education programming include:

- Clinical experiences in gerontological field placements increase students' interest in pursuing gerontological nursing (Burbank et al., 2006).
- Clinical sites should not be limited to long-term care and nursing homes, as the focus on symptomology and severely ill patients can stereotype older adults as frail and helpless (Bardach & Rowles, 2012).
- Courses that address the diversity of older adults' health and life experiences can increase positive feelings toward them by promoting socialization with older people, knowledge acquisition, and compassionate care (Burbank et al., 2006; Kohlenberg et al., 2007; Hsu et al., 2019).



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