

2003 Clinical Settings in Geriatric in Nursing
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Nursing
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Abstract. The University Of Arkansas Medical Sciences College Of Nursing offers a curriculum that emphasizes health promotion and health prevention in addition to illness/disease management of older adults. The course, *Nursing Care of the Older Adult*, focuses on the health needs of older adults in community, ambulatory, rehabilitative, acute, long-term care, and end of life settings. Placement of the *Nursing Care of the Older Adult* course as a semester long offering at the senior level and concurrent with the *Community Health Nursing* course provides students with a global view of the needs of older adults in diverse settings. The didactic component of the older adult course occurs in both the traditional classroom and Web based modules via the Internet. The clinical component of the course consists of 90 clinical hours with older adults in diverse settings.

Innovation. Students now care for older adults in primary, secondary and tertiary care settings, including frail elderly and their community dwelling caregivers. Community Health and Gerontologic Nursing faculty collaborated with the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences Reynolds Center on Aging to provide an opportunity for students to participate in a House Calls Program in which students were assigned older adults and their caregivers as clients. After participating in House Calls Program, students expressed changes in their view of older adults, and indicated a desire to work with older adults following graduation. The didactic component of the older adult course occurs in both the traditional classroom and WebCT modules via Internet. Topics include demographics, theories of aging, communication, physical and functional assessment, acute and chronic illness/disease management, pharmacotherapeutics, nutrition, mobility, death and dying, elimination, sexuality, and ethics. The role of the gerontological nurse is addressed in each unit. Papers and oral presentations conclude with a student reflection upon the value of the assignment to their learning. Classroom activities include case studies, vignettes, films, guest speakers including geriatric pharmacist from the UAMS Center on Aging, and assigned use of Internet sites to gather demographic information, governmental resources, and reliable information regarding topics on aging. Students demonstrate physical and functional assessment skills with appropriate use of standardized screening tools, and the development of age-appropriate goals, therapeutic interventions, and in-depth care planning for older adults. Two specialty clinical experiences, Pennebaker Adult Day Health Center and Arkansas Hospice Inpatient Facility, provide students the opportunity to communicate with older adults experiencing cognitive decline and or needing end-of-life care, and nurse managed ambulatory care clinic that provides services to four local subsidized high rises for the elderly. While at the nurse managed clinic students are active in health prevention and promotion, participating in such activities as blood pressure and blood glucose screenings, and provided influenza vaccinations. Students assisted with fall-prevention program, an initiative sponsored by UAMS Center on Aging. Older residents of the four high-rise residences received risk assessments and teaching on preventing falls. Older adults who were identified at high risk for falling had home safety assessments. Students also identified older adults having difficulty paying for medications for referral to Pharmaceutical Prescription Assistance Program (Drug Share Program) sponsored by Pfizer, Lilly, and GlaxoSmithKline. Students can attend Interdisciplinary Geriatric Grand Rounds in which current research and clinical practice issues are presented through UAMS Reynolds Center on Aging. An interdisciplinary focus is enhanced by specialty clinical experiences at Arkansas Veterans Hospital and Arkansas Hospice where students attend interdisciplinary team (IDT) conferences.

Replication. Replication of this curricular innovation requires faculty who are committed to caring for older adults and are amenable to collaborating between courses. This preparation requires knowledge of assessment skills and therapeutic interventions for older individuals as well as family needs and community resources. Ideally, student clinical experiences such as this would occur between two courses such as Community Health and Nursing Care of the Older Adult. When both courses run concurrently, sharing the assignments decreases the workload for students. The availability of a medical director or advanced practice nurse to recommend client assignments and to act as liaison between students and clients is most helpful. Alternatively, a partnership with a community or home health agency could facilitate this type of innovation.