

Geriatric Nursing in Pakistan: Caring for the Ones Who Cared for Us

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As the elderly population continues to grow worldwide, their physical and mental well-being begin to decline, leaving them susceptible to various health-related issues. [1]. According to WHO, from 2015 to 2050, the percentage of people aged 60 and over in the world will almost double, rising from 12% to 22% [2]. A recent study conducted on the geriatric population (≥ 60 years) in Karachi Pakistan (n=1200) concluded that the geriatric population is suffering from various disorders and health issues such as obesity (35.2%), depression (51.8%), cognitive impairment (63.1%), vision loss (31%) and chronic diseases (60%) [3]. The availability of nursing services, healthcare, and social support for older people is limited in both the public and private sectors, leading to significant concerns. As a society, we must question whether we are fulfilling our responsibility to care for those who once cared for us. With life expectancy on the rise, it is critical to consider how we will meet the evolving healthcare needs of our aging population. This highlights the urgent need for an effective and sustainable approach to elderly care that can address the challenges arising from demographic changes.

Our healthcare system is not yet ready to abide by the healthcare needs of the elderly but introducing geriatric nursing as a general and a subspecialty level in healthcare setups can reduce this burden. Geriatric nursing is a prior existing yet emerging field where geriatric nurses are trained and well-equipped to understand the disease process and healthcare-related needs of older people. To achieve our vision of geriatric home health care, we need to focus on interdisciplinary collaboration, effective communication, and culturally congruent care. This requires strengthening the political system and balancing social, technological, legal, and environmental factors. Ongoing training and education can raise awareness among healthcare professionals, while communication at various levels - interpersonal, organizational, community, and national - is crucial for successful implementation. This can involve communicating through family, friends, peers, media, social networking, stakeholder, and non-

governmental organizations, as well as holding meetings with directors and governing bodies at the policymaker level [4]. It is crucial to increase public awareness regarding elderly care through various media platforms and to include and implement geriatric care education in both undergraduate and graduate curricula across all nursing and medical schools in Pakistan [5].

As the growing population is rapidly growing access to quality healthcare must increase too and geriatric nurses can become a bridge between the older population and their access to quality care. Elderly care requires specific skills and knowledge about the physiological, social, and cultural impacts of aging hence professionally trained geriatric nurses can improve the quality of care and quality of life of older adults [6]. Rehabilitation and awareness programs led by these nurses on individual, family, and community levels can bring an optimistic change in identifying and taking care of the acute to chronic health conditions of our aging population.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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