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Short Textbooks for Nursing Education - Focus on Elderly Care

Theo Ahrens

Fundamentals of Elderly Care

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Bibliographic Information

Theo Ahrens – Short Biography

Theo Ahrens, born in 1979 near Munich, is a teacher for nursing professions and a dedicated nursing educator. After completing a voluntary social year at a hospital, he trained as a health and nursing practitioner, gaining valuable professional experience in the intensive care unit. Driven by his desire to impart knowledge, he studied nursing education and began teaching at a vocational school in Munich in 2009. Theo is known for his practical and empathetic teaching, preparing future nurses for their demanding profession. Privately, he lives with his wife and two children in Berlin and volunteers for better conditions in nursing education.

This short textbook was formulated from lesson plans of his classes using A.I. The translation was done automatically.

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1 Introduction

This book provides an initial overview of the tasks and challenges of elderly care. It is aimed at individuals who are considering a career in this field or have just started their training or work. The goal is to convey a fundamental understanding of the profession.

Elderly care is multifaceted and requires a combination of specialized knowledge, practical skills, and personal commitment. Basic knowledge regarding health conditions, care processes, and communication is essential. At the same time, one must be aware of the emotional and physical challenges the profession entails.

This book serves as an introduction and is supplemented by further textbooks that delve into specific subject areas in more detail. Therefore, it is advisable to seek additional information after reading it, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding and to be adequately prepared for specific situations. A conscious and well-informed start can significantly contribute to satisfaction and effectiveness in this meaningful vocation.

1.1 Purpose and Objective of Elderly Care Training

The geriatric nursing training imparts the necessary competencies to meet the diverse demands of this professional field. At its core are the transmission of specialized knowledge, the development of practical skills, and the promotion of social competencies. The goal is to train caregivers who can act caringly, empathetically, and professionally.

Specialized knowledge includes medical fundamentals, knowledge about age-related diseases, and the implementation of nursing measures. Practical skills are developed through the handling of medical devices, hygiene techniques, and the execution of care processes. Social competencies are crucial for effectively managing communication with those in need of care and their relatives.

Another purpose of the training is to promote critical thinking and to be prepared for unexpected situations. Caregivers must be able to recognize the individual needs of those in their care and adjust a corresponding care plan. This also includes legal and ethical knowledge, which are central to practicing the profession.

The training also emphasizes the resilience of caregivers. Managing stress, the ability to self-care, and protection against burnout are essential to be employed in geriatric care in the long term. The aim of this training is to create an awareness of one's own health and develop strategies for stress management.

Geriatric nursing training provides the foundation to ensure high-quality care for the elderly and to professionally meet the challenges of demographic change. Through comprehensive training, caregivers are empowered to undertake not only caregiving but also preventive and rehabilitative measures to improve the quality of life of older people.

1.2 The Importance of Elderly Care in Society

Geriatric nursing is an essential part of the social fabric, especially in light of demographic changes characterized by an aging population. The increase in average life expectancy leads to a growing demand for nursing services. Geriatric nursing not only ensures the physical well-being of older individuals but also preserves and enhances their quality of life.

Family structures are changing and traditional care within the family is increasingly challenging. Careers in geriatric nursing fill this gap and provide professional care when familial support is insufficient. Caregivers enable older individuals to live longer in their familiar environment, which positively affects their mental and physical health.

Geriatric nursing supports social inclusion by reducing social isolation. Caregivers often act as important social contacts, providing regular interaction and communication. This also promotes the social participation of those in need of care and helps counteract loneliness.

Geriatric nursing also contributes to economic stability by creating numerous jobs and thereby contributing to the gross domestic product. The sector offers a variety of career development opportunities, from basic care to specialized roles.

In societal discussions, geriatric nursing plays an important role in promoting the health and well-being of older individuals. It is crucial for maintaining the independence and autonomy of the elderly. At the same time, it is a symbol of humanitarian and compassionate care for the older generation, reflecting fundamental values of society.

In summary, geriatric nursing is an indispensable pillar of modern society, encompassing both social and economic aspects and marked by its growing importance in the context of a changing demographic profile.

1.3 Professional Ethics and Mission Statement in Elderly Care

Ethics in Elderly Care is based on the core values of human dignity, autonomy, and caregiving. Respecting human dignity is essential. Caregivers treat every person with respect and decency, regardless of their health status or life situation. Promoting the autonomy of those in need of care means maintaining and respecting their freedom of choice. Self-determination is a right that must be upheld in old age.

Caregiving requires empathy and commitment. Caregivers are encouraged to attentively address physical, social, and emotional needs. This includes treating the feelings and concerns of those in care with respect. At the same time, a professional distance is maintained to preserve necessary objectivity.

Responsibility is another cornerstone of professional ethics. Caregivers are accountable for their actions and held responsible. This includes continuous education to apply current care standards and scientific knowledge in practice.

The professional principles of elderly care include the commitment to professionalism, interdisciplinarity, and teamwork. Professionalism is demonstrated in the careful execution of care measures and adherence to ethical standards. Collaboration with colleagues and members of other professions is crucial to ensure comprehensive care.

Caregivers should serve as role models. This includes fostering a positive work environment and constructively managing conflicts. Ethical leadership inspires others and contributes to the positive development of care practices.

A significant aspect of professional ethics is handling sensitive information. Strict confidentiality is maintained to protect the privacy of those in care. Information is shared only within the scope of caregiving necessities. Adhering to these ethical guidelines facilitates the building of a trusting relationship.

Professional ethics reflect the moral principles that underpin elderly care. They provide a framework for professional and respectful interaction with those in need of care and form the basis for societal recognition and appreciation of the caregiving profession.

2 Definition and Fundamentals of Geriatric Care

2.1 What is Geriatric Care? – Definition and Scope

Geriatric care encompasses the care and support of older individuals to maintain and improve their quality of life. It focuses on their physical, psychological, and social needs. Geriatric nurses are responsible for carrying out care measures, assisting with personal hygiene, mobility, and nutrition, as well as administering medication. Care extends beyond physical provisions to include social interaction, taking into account the individual life stories and habits of those in need of care.

An important component of geriatric care is communication. It includes empathy and active listening, contributing to trust and security through reliable relationships. Geriatric care also involves recognizing and utilizing resources. It promotes the independence and self-determination of seniors by strengthening existing abilities and offering support without undermining personal responsibility.

Furthermore, the prevention of health risks is a part of geriatric care. Prophylactic measures such as fall and pressure ulcer prevention are central tasks. In complex care situations, close contact is maintained with doctors and therapists to ensure comprehensive care.

Geriatric care is interdisciplinary. It requires collaboration with various professional groups and institutions, including family members, doctors, therapists, and, if necessary, legal guardians. Coordinating this cooperation ensures continuous care for the individual receiving care.

Another aspect of geriatric care is the documentation and evaluation of the care process. Accurate records of all activities, observations, and changes ensure that the care plan is continuously adapted to the needs of the individuals requiring care and contribute to the quality of care. Geriatric care is a responsible task that requires both professional competence and human warmth and empathy.

2.2 Types of Elderly Care

Elderly care is organized in various forms to meet the individual needs of those requiring care. The basic forms include outpatient care, inpatient care, and semi-inpatient care.

Outpatient Care takes place in the home environment of the person in need of care. Caregivers visit the individual at home and provide necessary care services there. This form of care promotes independence as the familiar environment is maintained. Typical activities include assistance with personal care, nutritional counseling, and ensuring regular medication intake.

Inpatient Care occurs in care facilities where elderly individuals reside. This is often necessary when the level of care required is very high and comprehensive round-the-clock care becomes necessary. These facilities offer a wide range of care services, encompassing both medical care and social activities. The goal is to ensure the highest possible well-being, safety, and security.

Semi-Inpatient Care provides a mix of the other two forms. It is particularly suitable for elderly individuals who need intensive care and support during the day but wish to remain in their home environment in the evening and nighttime. Common offerings include day care facilities that promote social interaction and provide support in basic care.

Each form of elderly care has specific benefits and challenges and can be tailored to the individual needs of the elderly person. The choice of the appropriate form of care depends on various factors, including the degree of care required, the wishes of the person in need of care, and the available resources.

2.3 Differentiation from Other Areas of Nursing

Elderly care differs from other areas of nursing, such as medical and pediatric care, in several key aspects. While medical care focuses on the medical aspect to treat acute illnesses and postoperative conditions, elderly care places greater emphasis on long-term support, quality of life enhancement, and holistic care for older individuals. The needs of this clientele often include continuous assistance with chronic illnesses and age-related limitations, complemented by preventive measures and social interaction.

Pediatric care focuses on the development and nurturing of children from infancy to adolescence. The goal is to enable healthy growth and prevent developmental delays. Here, educational aspects and supporting the child's development play a central role. In contrast, elderly care often involves tasks focused on maintaining existing abilities and accompanying the individual through aging, with promoting independence as the highest aim.

Another characteristic of elderly care, compared to other nursing areas, is the presence of a more diverse social and psychological spectrum, ranging from experiences of loss and grief to themes of mortality. These topics require special sensitivity and expertise in addressing the emotional needs of the elderly.

Interdisciplinary cooperation in elderly care is of higher relevance compared to medical and pediatric care due to the frequent combined presence of multiple chronic illnesses and social stress factors in elderly patients. This requires close coordination between various disciplines to ensure comprehensive care.

2.4 Objectives of Elderly Care

In geriatric care, the focus is on promoting self-determination, autonomy, and the quality of life of older individuals. A key objective is to preserve and improve quality of life through individualized care and support. The needs of older people are diverse and require a flexible approach.

A central goal of geriatric care is the preservation and promotion of self-determination for those in need of care. This means allowing seniors as much control as possible over their lives and daily decisions. Caregivers employ targeted measures and motivate those in care to maintain or regain their independence.

Autonomy in geriatric care involves enabling older individuals to express and implement their personal desires and life habits, despite physical or mental limitations. Care professionals must ensure that these decisions are respected and implemented wherever possible.

Furthermore, geriatric care aims to promote physical, psychological, and social health and to maintain or enhance existing abilities. This includes integration into social networks and the promotion of social interactions to prevent loneliness and isolation.

Another goal of geriatric care is to avoid hospital stays and support individuals in remaining in their familiar environment for as long as possible. Preventive measures to reduce risks, such as fall prevention and health promotion, are also part of the objectives.

Assistance in coping with age-related limitations and support in managing chronic diseases contribute to an increased quality of life. This also includes providing palliative care when necessary to ensure a dignified and pain-free life until the end.

Ultimately, the aim of geriatric care is to enable a dignified life in old age, characterized by respect and appreciation. Every measure in geriatric care should be tailored to individual needs and maintain the balance between support and personal responsibility.

3 Nursing Theories and Nursing Science

3.1 Significance of Nursing Science for Elderly Care

Nursing science serves as a foundation to continuously improve the quality of elderly care. It provides methods and concepts that aid in developing, reviewing, and standardizing nursing interventions. A central aspect is the systematic collection and analysis of nursing phenomena, leading to the development of evidence-based nursing practices.

Through scientific research, standards are developed that increase both the efficiency and effectiveness of care. This involves the creation of guidelines that assist caregivers in decision-making and ensure that the care of the elderly is based on the latest research.

Critical reflection and adaptability are essential competencies promoted by nursing science. Caregivers must be able to integrate new knowledge and apply it to specific care situations. Research findings provide the foundation to critically question and adapt existing nursing concepts.

Furthermore, nursing science contributes to the professionalization of the profession by theoretically underpinning and scientifically supporting nursing actions. This also enhances the reputation and self-perception of professionals in elderly care.

Another important contribution of nursing science is the promotion of interdisciplinary collaboration. Through scientific exchange with other fields, a holistic understanding of care emerges, leading to better care for those in need.

In summary, nursing science makes a significant contribution to ensuring and further developing the quality of elderly care through well-founded, evidence-based knowledge that forms the basis for effective nursing interventions.

3.2 Overview of Important Nursing Theories

Virginia Henderson's Nursing Theory

Virginia Henderson defined 14 fundamental needs of humans as the basis for nursing care. These needs include, among others, breathing, nutrition, elimination, and mobility. The goal is to support patients in fulfilling as many of these needs as independently as possible. The theory promotes the independence of individuals requiring care by having nurses intervene only where self-sufficiency is impaired.

Monika Krohwinkel's Nursing Concept

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