

Geriatric Assessment History Taking and Physical Assessment

Objectives

- To demonstrate skills in communicating with a geriatric client/patient in assessment
- To demonstrate competencies in history taking specific to the geriatric client/patient
- To describe methods/tools used in system-wise geriatric assessment in nursing
- To demonstrate the ability to apply different assessment tools in system-wise geriatric assessment in nursing
- To interpret the physical assessment findings and identify the normal and abnormal status of the geriatric patient/client

Tips for History Taking in Older Adults

- Build rapport, show empathy, and respect
- Ensure comfort, warmth, privacy, dignity
- Consider sensory, cognitive, and functional limitations
- Use open-ended questions, clarify with closed-ended
- Explore psychosocial and functional domains
- Check medication use, polypharmacy, adherence
- Screen for memory loss, depression, and fall risk

Special Considerations in Communicating with an older adult while taking history and during physical examination

- Speak clearly, slowly, and use simple language
- Allow extra time for responses
- Use glasses, hearing aids if available
- Face the patient directly, maintain eye contact
- Involve family/caregiver if appropriate
- Ensure good lighting and a quiet environment

Geriatric History Taking Format

1. Socio-Demographic Data

- Name / Age / Gender
- Marital status / Living arrangements (alone, with family, institution)
- Education level, Occupation (previous/retired)
- Financial status, Social support, Caregiver availability

2. Chief Complaint

- Main reason for visit (in patient's own words)
- Duration, progression, effect on daily life

History taking Cont.

3. History of Present Illness

- Onset, course, aggravating/relieving factors
- Impact on mobility, ADLs (Activities of Daily Living)
- Recent weight loss, appetite, fatigue, falls

4. Past Medical & Surgical History

- Chronic illnesses (HTN, DM, CAD, COPD, Osteoporosis, Dementia, Stroke)
- Past hospitalizations & surgeries
- Allergies, Immunization status

History taking Cont.

5. Medication History

- Current medications (including OTC & herbal remedies)
- Polypharmacy (≥ 5 drugs), compliance issues, side effects

6. Family History

- Genetic diseases, longevity, family support system

7. Social History

- Smoking, alcohol, betel chewing, substance use
- Daily activities, hobbies, community participation

8. Functional History

- **ADLs:** bathing, dressing, toileting, feeding, continence
- **IADLs:** shopping, cooking, cleaning, managing finances, using phone

History taking Cont.

9. Nutritional History

- Appetite, chewing/swallowing difficulty, dietary habits

10. Cognitive & Psychological History

- Memory loss, depression, anxiety, sleep pattern
- Screening (MMSE, GDS)

11. Review of Systems (ROS)

- General: fever, fatigue, weight loss
- Systems-specific complaints

Physical Assessment in Geriatrics

System-Wise Physical Assessment in Geriatrics

1. General Examination

- Appearance, grooming, posture
- Vital signs: BP (sitting/standing), HR, RR, Temp, SpO₂
- Height, weight, BMI

Physical examination Cont.

2. Skin

- Elasticity, turgor, dryness, pressure ulcers, lesions, bruises

3. Head & Neck

- Vision (Snellen chart), hearing (Whisper test, Rinne/Weber)
- Oral cavity (teeth, dentures, mucosa), neck masses, thyroid

Physical Examination Cont.

4. Cardiovascular System

- Heart sounds, murmurs, peripheral pulses, edema

5. Respiratory System

- Chest shape, expansion, breath sounds, wheeze/crackles

6. Gastrointestinal System

- Abdomen (inspection, palpation, percussion, auscultation)
- Bowel habits, incontinence, constipation

Physical examination Cont.

7. Genitourinary System

- Urinary frequency, urgency, incontinence
- Prostate symptoms (men), pelvic exam if needed (women)

8. Musculoskeletal System

- Gait, mobility, joint stiffness, deformities, osteoporosis signs
- Fall risk assessment

9. Neurological System

- Orientation, memory, reflexes, cranial nerves
- Tremors, balance, coordination, muscle strength

References

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- **Eliopoulos, C. (2022).** *Gerontological Nursing* (10th ed.). Wolters Kluwer.

Thank you!

