

Communicating with Older Adults, Families, and Healthcare Teams

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Intended Learning Outcomes

- Communicate effectively with older adults, families and healthcare teams, demonstrating empathy
- Understanding geriatric-specific communication concerns

Who are Older Adults?

- Between 60 – 75 years = young old
- Between 75 – 85 years = old
- 85+ years = older adults having frailty

Aging...

- Impact of the accumulation of a wide variety of molecular and cellular damage over time leads to a gradual decrease in physical and mental capacity, a growing risk of disease and ultimately death (*WHO,2014*)
- These changes are neither linear nor consistent, only loosely associated with a person's age in years.
- Beyond biological changes, it is often associated with other life transitions:
 - ☐ Retirement
 - ☐ Relocation to more appropriate housing
 - ☐ Death of friends and partners

Effective Communication in Geriatric Care

- Build trust and rapport
- Improves adherence to physiotherapy
- Enhances interdisciplinary collaboration

- Comprehensive geriatric assessment (CGA) is a multidimensional interdisciplinary assessment for evaluating the medical, psychological, physical functions and socioeconomic problems to detect unidentified and potentially reversible problems and develop a coordinated and integrated management plan for treatment and long-term care plan.

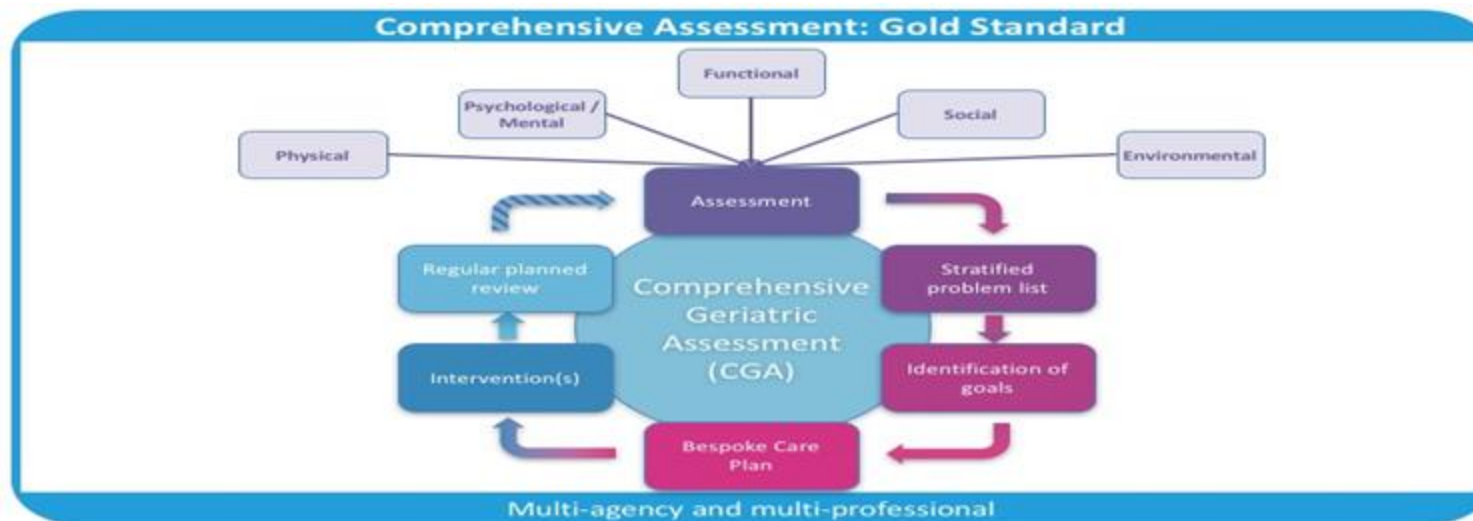


Image source: https://www.physio-pedia.com/images/7/7b/CGA_Image_2.jpg?20200915154948

Why is it Difficult?

- Hearing impairments
- Speech/language deficits (e.g. Aphasia)
- Cognitive decline (e.g. Dementia)

Tips For Communicating With Older Patients

- Allow extra time for older patients
- Minimize visual and auditory distractions
- Sit face to face with the patient
- Maintain eye contact
- Listen without interrupting the patient
- Speak slowly, clearly and loudly
- Use short, simple words and sentences
- Stick to one topic at a time

Tips For Communicating With Older Patients Cont..

- Simplify and write down your instructions.
- Use charts, models and pictures to illustrate your message.
- Frequently summarize the most important points.
- Give the patient a chance to ask questions.

VISIT SUMMARY

Key points we discussed today:

Your blood pressure is 150/90.

Your goal is less than 130/85.

Diet and exercise are key to controlling your hypertension.

New medications:

benazepril (Lotensin) 10 mg - one tablet per day

Instructions:

Take your new pill when you first get up in the morning.

Walk around the block every morning.

Walk around the block every afternoon.

Cut back on salt and alcohol.

Come back for a follow-up visit in 2 weeks.

Call our office if symptoms worsen or if you have any questions.

John Smith, MD

9 / 6 / 06

Physician

Date

Image source: https://encrypted-tbn1.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTQ20kDuethIjIN8Kl6qDgZPKT7_0Uyl0aiP2EayjTwEOZLp8t4

Tips For Communicating With Older Patients Cont..

- Schedule older patients earlier in the day
- Greet them as they arrive at the practice
- Seat them in a quiet, comfortable area
- Make signs, forms and brochures easy to read
- Be prepared to escort elderly patients from room to room
- Check on them if they've been waiting in the exam room
- Use touch to keep the patient relaxed and focused
- Say goodbye, to end the visit on a positive note

Educating Families and Caregivers

- Clarify physiotherapy goals and expected outcomes
- Emphasize the role of caregivers in rehabilitation
- Use lay terms and analogies
- Address concerns and expectations empathetically

Communicating Prognosis and Planning

- Be honest but compassionate
- Avoid jargon; focus on functional improvements
- Involve family members in goal setting

Interdisciplinary Communication

- Collaborate with health care professionals
- Shared decision making and shared goals
- Trust and mutual respect
- Technology (Telehealth)
- Examples: Geriatric evaluation units, Acute care of the elderly units, Palliative care

Things To Avoid Doing

- Criticizing, blaming or raising your voice at them.
- Talking too much, too rapidly, too loudly (Silence and pauses are ok).
- Showing any form of hostility towards them.
- Assuming things about them or their situation.
- Being sarcastic or making jokes about their condition.
- Patronizing them or saying anything condescending.

Miscommunication?

Thank you!