

Aging

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Ageism

► Definition

► “The prejudices and stereotypes that are applied to older people sheerly on the basis of their age....” (Butler, Lewis & Sutherland, 1991). (Eliopoulos, Gerontological

Nursing, 5th edition, p. 42).

► Actions, terms, and labels for older adults based on poor attitudes and lack of adequate information and knowledge about aging.

Ageism

- ▶ Ageism....is a system of destructive, false beliefs about our elderly that are pervasive in our society."
- ▶ "Health professionals are more susceptible than the lay public to the development of ageist assumptions." (Dr. Robert Adelman)

Ageism is Dangerous

- ▶ Limits human opportunity
- ▶ Denies individuals the respect, freedom, and protection
- ▶ Makes people the victims of their own false belief
- ▶ Negative role modeling
- ▶ Ageism in the media is harmful to the health of the elderly
- ▶ Older people with positive perceptions of aging lived $7 \frac{1}{2}$ years longer than those exposed to negative images. (20 year study published in 2002 by Becca R. Levy at Yale University)
- ▶ As a society, we need to *show appreciation for the contributions of older adults and their wealth of resources.*

Myths & Facts of Aging

Myth #1 Intelligence

- ▶ Crystal intelligence increases
- ▶ Fluid intelligence decreases
- ▶ Mental and physical exercises enhances dendrite growth
- ▶ You can teach an old dog new tricks

Myth #2 Forgetful

- ▶ Remembrance is related to the meaningfulness of the event and organization of facts

Myths & Facts of Aging

Myth #3

Senile – Layman's term. Medical term is dementia-reversible, irreversible

- ▶ Reversible dementias
- ▶ D Drugs: Delirium
- ▶ E Emotions (e.g. depression, endocrine disorders)
- ▶ M Metabolic disturbances
- ▶ E Eye and Ear impairments
- ▶ N Nutritional disorders
- ▶ T Tumors, toxicity, trauma to head
- ▶ I Infectious disorders
- ▶ A Alcohol, arteriosclerosis

Myths & Facts of Aging

Irreversible Dementias

- ▶ 65% Alzheimer's Disease
- ▶ 7% Dementia with Lewy Bodies
- ▶ 5% Multi-Infarct/Vascular
- ▶ 15% Mixed Dementia (Combination of above types)
- ▶ 8% Other Causes (Dr. Jorge A. Rivero, UCIMC, March 20, 2003)

Myths & Facts of Aging

Brain

- ▶ 3 Categories
 - ▶ Successful Aging- 10 to 30% Maintain high mental function
 - ▶ Usual Aging- Function moderately well
 - ▶ 25 to 30% Dementia
- ▶ Mental Agility can be controlled
 - ▶ Staying intellectually, physically, socially active
 - ▶ Continuing to challenge the brain-mind is like muscles, needs to be exercised or atrophies

TRY SOMETHING NEW AND DIFFERENT EVERYDAY

Myths & Facts of Aging

Depression

- ▶ It is not a normal part of growing older
- ▶ It affects 15-20% of U.S. older adults
- ▶ It is a widely under-recognized and under-treated medical illness
 - ▶ It is higher in older adults who are socially isolated, are home bound, have several medical conditions, have functional impairment
- ▶ It affects 25% of those with chronic illness-ischemic heart disease, stroke, cancer, chronic lung disease, arthritis, Alzheimer's disease, and Parkinson's disease
- ▶ Prevalence increases with the prevalence and severity of medical comorbidity and disability
- ▶ *Lowest rate of clinical depression is among those living independently in a community*

Myths & Facts of Aging

Suicide

- ▶ Suicide rate among older adults is higher than that for any other age group
- ▶ White men age 85 and older were most likely to die by suicide (NIMH 2009) the highest rate of all
- ▶ Many older adults who commit suicide have visited a primary care physician very close to the time of the suicide:
 - ▶ 20% on the same day
 - ▶ 40% within 1 week
 - ▶ 75% within one month
- ▶ Depression tends to be long-lasting and recurrent-a wait and see approach to undesirable and immediate clinical attention is necessary.
- ▶ If recognized, treatment response is good-it is treatable in 80% of cases

www.nimh.nih.gov/healthinformation

Myths & Facts of Aging

Myth #4 Afraid of Death

- ▶ Older people are not afraid of death
- ▶ Fear of dying alone and in pain

Myth #5 Institutionalization

- ▶ Only about 5% are in nursing homes at any given time
- ▶ 40% will be in some time before they die
- ▶ Majority live in communities

Myths & Facts of Aging

Myth #6 Sunny Climates

- ▶ Only about 5% move

Myth #7 Religious

- ▶ Aging does not make people more religious
- ▶ People who already have acknowledged religion, continue their practice
- ▶ People do not turn religious at age 65

Myth #8 Dependent

- ▶ People want to remain independent as long as they can

Myths & Facts of Aging

Myth #9 Unproductive or useless

- ▶ Productiveness is dictated by the society's retirement age
- ▶ Some professions, for example like musicians, writers continue to work

Myth #10 Incontinent

- ▶ It is not a result of aging nor is it a disease
- ▶ It is a symptom of existing environmental, psychologic, drug, or physical disturbances... (Ebersole & Hess, Geriatric Nursing & Healthy Aging, 1st ed., p 186)

Myths & Facts of Aging

- ▶ **Myth #11 Old people are sick**
- ▶ 50% Healthy and optimistic spend \$400/year on healthcare
- ▶ 40% Moderately sick spend median %5,000/year
- ▶ 10% Very sick spend average \$42.000/year (Dr. George Xakellis, UC Davis, 4/19/2002)

- ▶ **Myth #12 Less Food**
- ▶ Need same food pyramid requirements except for caloric requirements

- ▶ **Myth #13 Shrinking**
- ▶ It is a sign of disease, osteoporosis

Myths & Facts of Aging

- ▶ **Myth #14 Wrinkles**
- ▶ The amount of skin damage is related to solar exposure, smoking, alcohol abuse
- ▶ **Myth #15 Sexless**
- ▶ Sexuality and sexual interest reflect lifelong patterns
- ▶ With good health and the availability of a partner, sexual activity can continue into the 70's and beyond

Myths & Facts of Aging

► Myth # 16 Falls

- Falls are not normal with aging
- The leading cause of injury deaths in older adults (CDC, 2009)
- 1 in 3 community-dwelling elderly 65+, fall each year
- Fatal falls, traumatic brain injury 46%
- Non-fatal injuries: hip fractures 20-30%
- At risk population-over 50% will fall again within a year
- Falls are multifactorial
- The leading risk factors: depression, balance problems, polypharmacy
- 50% of all falls can be prevented through a comprehensive fall prevention program

UNC@Chapel Hill, March 2009)

(Professors Marks & Katz,

Myths & Facts of Aging

Myth # 17 Cannot learn

- ▶ "you can't teach old dogs new tricks."
- ▶ "Older adults maintain the capacity to learn..." (Eliopoulos, Gerontological Nursing, 5th edition, p. 60).

Myth # 18 Old people are the same

- ▶ Heterogeneity is the hallmark of aging: the older we get, the more different we become: cognitively, physically

Myth # 19 Age 65 is old

- ▶ Gerontologist say you are as young as you feel
- ▶ There is no mandatory retirement age

Cultural View Aging

Ageism is pervasive in the Western culture

- ▶ African/Asian/Middle Eastern/Hispanic culture view elderly with respect
- ▶ Filial Piety
- ▶ Unconditional obedience to parents by Chinese philosopher, Confucius

Chinese Americans

- ▶ Older adults are given high respect and sought for advice
- ▶ The family is expected to take care of its elderly

(Eliopoulos, Gerontological Nursing, 7th edition, 2010).

Cultural View Aging

African Americans

- ▶ To survive to old age is considered a major accomplishment that reflects strength, resourcefulness and faith for this ethnic group: thus old age may be considered a personal triumph
- ▶ They look to family members for decision-making and care (Eliopoulos, Gerontological Nursing, 7th edition, 2010).

Hispanic Americans

- ▶ Older relatives are held in high esteem
- ▶ “Hispanic people may expect that children will take care of their aging parents, and families may try to avoid institutionalization at all cost.” (Eliopoulos, Gerontological Nursing, 7th edition, 2010).

Cultural View Aging

Stereotypes

- ▶ Bossy
- ▶ Complainier
- ▶ Demanding
- ▶ Grouchy
- ▶ Impatient
- ▶ Intolerable
- ▶ Stubborn

Personality in late life is a refection of lifelong personality