



# 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, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 42).
- ▶ Actions, terms, and labels for older adults based on poor attitudes and lace 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 ½ 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

# 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, 1<sup>st</sup> 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, 5<sup>th</sup> 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, 7<sup>th</sup> 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, 7<sup>th</sup> 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, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, 2010).

# Cultural View Aging

## Stereotypes

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

Personality in late life is a reflection of lifelong personality