
Book review

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Health Promotion of the Elderly in the Community, 1989 by Estelle F. Heckheimer, RN, MA. W.B. Saunders Company, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. The Curtis Center, Independence Square West, Philadelphia, PA 19106. 418 pages. \$29.95.

Health Promotion of the Elderly in the Community is an excellent reference for nurses working with the elderly in many different settings. The book is written in outline form and divided into two sections presenting body systems and common problems and concerns. This allows the reader to easily find specific content. The disadvantage to the outline format is that the book cannot be used as a text. The author states in the preface: "This handbook supplies health care providers with current, easily accessible information in outline form concerning primary and secondary changes, common health problems, and chronic

health problems of the elderly in the community."

The book contains references to most of the concerns facing the elderly today. The first two chapters of the book cover primary aging in the physical and psychosocial dimensions. The physical dimension covers normal changes expected in each system of the body. The last section of the first chapter presents limited strategies for health promotion; only three suggestions are given followed by several pages of resources ranging from self-help groups to publications available. This last section of the book was disappointing. The reader expected health promotion to be a large part of the chapter because health promotion is an important aspect in working with the elderly. However, the list of resources is comprehensive and would be useful in obtaining information from governmental and voluntary organizations.

The second chapter covers the normal psychosocial changes in the emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual dimensions. Each of the sections is short but covers the

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major issues. The strategies contained in these sections are brief with rather simple suggestions.

The next chapter is on common problems experienced by the elderly such as skin changes, constipation, and sleep disturbances. The physiologic bases of each of the problems are presented followed by factors predisposing the problem and comprehensive strategies for helping the elderly prevent or reduce the problem. This chapter contains interesting information on accidental hypothermia, with an extensive list of predisposing factors and assessment guidelines.

The next chapter discusses meeting the nutritional needs of the elderly. Recommended daily dietary allowance requirements are presented as well as suggestions for obtaining a comprehensive assessment of the client's nutritional status. The strategies for promoting good nutrition are creative and potentially useful in working with the elderly.

The following two chapters are related to drug use, drug therapy, and drug compliance in the elderly. The chapters are well written and comprehensive with an interesting table related to medication errors and strategies to promote patient compliance. Since drug use and compliance with drug treatment are two of the major concerns when working with the elderly, these chapters are an excellent resource.

A chapter on vision and aging includes pictures of the effect various conditions have on eyesight such as cataracts, macular degeneration, and diabetic retinopathy. Each of the usual vision problems is discussed as well as strategies for improving vision or living with decreased vision.

The chapter on sexuality and the elderly presents normal patterns of sexual activity, effect of drug therapy, and sexual dysfunction in the elderly. The effects various

illnesses and surgeries can have on sexuality are presented with strategies to alleviate the resulting sexual dysfunction. This chapter also covers several emotional issues related to sexual functioning; however, the chapter primarily covers physical influences on sexual functioning.

Several chapters are related to helping elderly clients with such common conditions as arthritis, glucose metabolism, and cardiac problems. These chapters contain an overview of the characteristics of related diseases as well as strategies to prevent or limit the effects of the diseases. The strategies in these sections are specific and creative for improving the quality of life in the elderly.

A chapter on depression and dementia is included in the book. The content presented includes an assessment for depression as well as strategies for caregivers and the clients.

A chapter on chronic health problems addresses such issues as urinary incontinence, osteoporosis, and chronic pain. For each of the chronic problems identified, assessment guidelines and approaches for dealing with the problem are discussed. Since the chapter covers several problems, the content on each condition is limited.

A chapter is included on accidents, crime, and abuse prevention. These are increasing concerns for the elderly. The chapter includes a comprehensive overview of potentially violent situations facing the elderly and strategies to prevent falls and burns. Con games and robbery are addressed but the presentation is superficial. A list of resources, although limited, is included relative to crimes affecting the elderly.

The last chapter, "Making It In the Community," is a collection of information on issues such as community resources, various living arrangements, legal concerns, and senior political action.

Overall the book is a comprehensive reference guide that would be useful in working with the elderly. A major advantage of the book is the ease of having one book as a reference for almost any issue a health care provider would need when working with the elderly in almost any setting.

The disadvantage of the book is that some of the content is superficial, perhaps

as it would have to be to cover the wide variety of issues and problems highlighted.

The book would be useful as a reference for nurses in home health care. The assessment guidelines could be used to validate normal changes from changes that may need health care intervention. The author is to be commended for providing a comprehensive and concise book relative to a fast-growing segment of the population.