



**Specialty Nursing Association  
Global Vision Statement on Care of Older Adults**

**Contact: Mathy Mezey, EdD, RN, FAAN  
(212) 998-5337; mathy.mezey@nyu.edu**

The unparalleled increase in the older-adult population impacts every aspect of health care delivery in the United States. With the total number of people aged 65 and over expected to represent approximately 20% of the U.S. population by 2030, older adults require a nurse workforce equipped to meet their growing and specific health care needs.

Older adults constitute the largest group of health care users across all settings, and virtually all nurses care for older adults in their subspecialties. In addition to having acute and episodic illnesses, many older adults require close nursing assessment and management related to one or more chronic illnesses. Cardiovascular, obstructive pulmonary, liver, and renal disease, as well as cancer and diabetes pose exceptional challenges to older adults.

- More than 83% of cardiovascular disease deaths occur in people age 65 and older.
- In 2004, heart disease was noted on 68% of diabetes-related death certificates among people aged 65 years or older.
- Nearly 25% of adults aged 60 and older have diabetes, which is an important contributor to CVD, micro vascular complications, and disability.
- From 2001 to 2005, 56% of all cancer diagnoses and 70% of cancer deaths were in Americans aged 65 and older.
- Injury death rates in older adults are more than twice that of younger adults with comparable injuries.
- Hospital emergency departments report increasing numbers of older-adult visits.

It is, thus, imperative that nurses have the competence to deliver care to older adults. Yet, the majority of nurses received no or little information about best practices in the care of older adults from their undergraduate or graduate specialty-degree programs.

Fifty-five specialty nursing associations representing more than 400,000 nurses have taken action to ensure the competence of nurses to care for older adults. Collaboratively through the Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing specialty nursing initiative\*, national specialty nursing associations are speaking with one voice to promote optimal care for older adults.

\* REASN (Resourcefully Enhancing Aging in Specialty Nursing)

**It is the position of specialty nursing associations that:**

- Older adults receive care sensitive to the physiological, functional, and psychological needs that set them apart from younger adults
- All nurses appreciate the wide spectrum of health of people age 65 and over, and are responsive to the needs of “healthy” and “frail” older adults, taking into account cultural diversity
- All nurses are familiar with the evidence-based body of knowledge about care of older adults
- All pre-licensure and post-licensure nursing education programs incorporate competencies related to care of older adults
- Care of older adults be an essential element of hospital staff development education
- Hospitals, home care, and institutional long-term care settings establish systems that support best practices in care of older adults
- Care of older adults be seen as a responsibility of all nurses crossing all specialties
- Practicing nurses look to specialty nursing associations as resources for evidence-based clinical-care information related to care of older adults

**This statement is supported/endorsed by the following members of the Coalition of Geriatric Nursing Organizations (CGNO):**

American Assisted Living Nurses Association (AALNA)  
American Association for Long Term Care Nursing (AALTCN)  
Long-term Care Nursenet (LTCNN)  
National Association of Directors of Nursing in Administration in Long Term Care (NADONA/LTC)  
National Conference of Gerontological Nurse Practitioners (NCGNP)  
National Gerontological Nursing Association (NGNA)  
The Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing, New York University College of Nursing

**The following Specialty Nursing Associations endorse this Global Position Statement on Care of Older Adults**

American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN)  
American Society for Pain Management Nursing (ASPMN)  
American Society of Perianesthesia Nurses (ASPAN)  
Center for American Nurses  
Emergency Nurses Association (ENA)  
Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA)  
Oncology Nursing Society (ONS)  
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association (PCNA)  
Society of Urologic Nurses and Associates (SUNA)

## References

American College of Surgeons. National Trauma Data Bank. (2007). Chicago: American College of Surgeons. Available online: <http://www.facs.org/trauma/ntdb.html>.

American Heart Association (2004). Older Americans and Cardiovascular Diseases — Statistics

Older Americans and cardiovascular diseases. Accessed: August 2008.

<http://www.americanheart.org/downloadable/heart/1136584495498OlderAm06.pdf>.

Berman, A., Mezey, M., Kobayashi, M., Fulmer, T., Stanley, J., & Rosenfeld, P. (2005). Gerontological Nursing Content in Baccalaureate Nursing Programs: Comparison of Findings from 1997 and 2003. *The Journal of Professional Nursing*, 21(5),268-275.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National diabetes fact sheet: general information and national estimates on diabetes in the United States, 2007. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008.

[http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pubs/pdf/ndfs\\_2007.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pubs/pdf/ndfs_2007.pdf).

MacLean, S.L. (2001). *2001 ENA benchmark guide: Emergency departments*. Emergency Nurses Association. Des Plaines, IL.

Ries, L. A. G., Melbert, D., Krapcho, M., Stinchcomb, D.G., Howlader, N., Horner, M. J., Mariotto, A., Miller, B. A., Feuer, E. J., Altekruse, S. F., Lewis, D. R., Clegg, L., Eisner, M. P., Reichman, M., Edwards, B. K. (eds). (2007) *SEER Cancer Statistics Review, 1975-2005*, National Cancer Institute. Bethesda, MD, [http://seer.cancer.gov/csr/1975\\_2005/](http://seer.cancer.gov/csr/1975_2005/), based on November 2007 SEER data submission, posted to the SEER web site, 2008.

Scheetz, L.J. (2005). Relationship of age, injury severity, injury type, comorbid conditions, level of care, and survival among older motor vehicle trauma patients. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 28(3),198-209.

Through the Hartford Institute specialty nursing initiative, *REASN* (Resourcefully Enhancing Aging in Specialty Nursing), specialty nursing associations are developing initiatives and products targeted to practicing nurses in specialty areas.

[www.ConsultGeriRN.org](http://www.ConsultGeriRN.org)