

[Open Peer Review on Qeios](#)

# Challenges and Suggested Solutions in Acute Nursing Practice for Primary Care and the Emergency Department

Shyh Poh Teo<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha (RIPAS) Hospital

**Funding:** The author(s) received no specific funding for this work.

**Potential competing interests:** The author(s) declared that no potential competing interests exist.

## Abstract

The following summarises the discussion points for the workshop on Care of the Elderly for the Masters of Nursing Cohort 2 HN5109 Acute Nursing Practice module held on 31st April 2022. Participants were nursing officers from Primary Care and Emergency Department. During the workshop, the challenges and suggested solutions for acute nursing practices in primary care and Emergency Department were provided by the participants. An overview of the ageing demographics and Geriatric Medicine Services in Brunei was presented. It is hoped that this session will raise the awareness of the course participants on the care issues of older people in acute settings.

## Aging Demographics in Brunei:

- Brunei has a rapid rate of ageing due to increased life expectancy and reduced fertility rate
- The speed of population ageing is determined by the time taken for a country to change from an ageing population (7% of population aged 65 years and older) to an aged population (14% of population aged 65 years and older)
- For the Western Pacific region, several countries estimated duration from ageing to aged are as follows:
  - Australia and New Zealand (64 years)
  - Hong Kong (30 years)
  - Japan (24 years)
  - Malaysia (24 years)
  - Singapore (17 years)
  - Brunei (13 years)
- By 2045, Brunei will have the third highest proportion of older people in South East Asia, behind Singapore and Thailand
- This will require service planning, including availability of community supports.
- Based on the 2011 census data, among those aged 80 years and older, approximately one-third of males are widowed, while three-quarters of females are widowed. Without a spouse, this group must depend on the younger generations for support and assistance with care
- In 2021, the government spent \$117 million on the old-age pension given to 39890 recipients (increase of 6.9%) from

the previous year

- Strategic planning for older people in Brunei is led by Ministry of Culture Youth and Sports, currently updating the National Action Plan for Older People (Pelan Tindakan Warga Emas)
- This will require a multi-sectoral 'Whole of Nation' approach, with broad ranging considerations such as transport, age-friendly environment, community support services in a sustainable, longer-term plan

### **Geriatric Medicine Services:**

The following services are provided by Geriatric Medicine:

- Inpatient Geriatric Services and consultations
- Ortho-geriatrics Liaison Service
- Outpatient Clinics - Memory Clinic, Parkinson's Clinic, Ortho-geriatrics, General Geriatrics
- Weekly multidisciplinary team case conference - with physiotherapy, occupational therapy, medical social worker
- Medical support for Home Based Nursing
- *Geriatrics and Palliative Nursing Community Visits*
- Geriatrics and Palliative Helpline
- Proxy Clinics and renewal of medication prescriptions
- Dementia Support Groups (collaboration with Neurology and Allied Health Professionals)

Note: Community visits and Dementia Support Groups were put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic

### **Main Issues for Acute Nursing Care in Primary Care and Emergency Department:**

The main issues or challenges identified in primary care from the nursing perspective are:

- Providing primary care services to older people with limited mobility and abilities in performing activities of daily living
- Health education and communication for chronic diseases such as diabetes
- Bedbound older people
- Older patients or family members that refuse to come to clinic or hospitals

The main issues or challenges identified in Emergency Department (ED) from the nursing perspective are:

- Unfamiliar, noisy and busy ED environment
- Limited nursing training in geriatrics
- Needing to overcome 'physiological changes' with age, such as poor cognition, limited functional status, poor fine motor skills, impairment in hearing or vision
- Polypharmacy and drug interactions
- Long length of stay in ED

- ‘Unsafe’ ED environment for older people e.g. faulty bed rails, lack of mobility aids, slippery toilets

### **Solutions and Recommendations for Acute Nursing Care in Primary Care and Emergency Department:**

For primary care, the following suggestions were provided:

- Increased family involvement in caring for older people, including how to assist and adapt the home environment
- Involve family in management of chronic diseases, especially medication compliance
- Health education and promotion, which needs to be simple and clearly communicated, with resource materials
- Longer consultation times for older people
- For those who refuse treatment or consultations, they may need discussions or convincing regarding management of specific care goals; this requires good communication skills and shared decision making
- Integration of care and involvement of other healthcare professionals and stakeholders

For ED, the following recommendations were given:

- Appropriate older -person friendly environment to promote safety and comfort
- Increase ED nursing knowledge and expertise in geriatric care and approach
- Checklist to assess the needs of older people in ED
- Availability of functional equipment and mobility aids in ED for the use of older people
- Volunteers to assist older people and minimise caregiver burden
- Medication review and reconciliation for side-effects and interactions
- Provide clear communication and information in a timely manner to avoid patient frustrations with delays or uncertainties regarding their illness

### **Framework for Care of Older People for Healthcare Facilities:**

The following framework for care of older people was shared during the session, outlining the required considerations for an age-friendly healthcare facility:

- Organisational Support: Corporate Commitment
- Emotional and Behavioural Environment:
  - Person-centred care
  - Culture and diversity
  - Patient safety
  - Elder abuse (Prevention and Identification)
- Processes of Care:
  - Delirium

- Functional decline
- Cognitive assessment
- Dementia and responsive behaviours
- Depression
- Falls
- High risk screening
- Hydration and nutrition
- Incontinence: bladder
- Incontinence: bowel
- Medications
- Oral health
- Pain
- Restraints
- Skin and wound care
- Other processes of care and resources
- Ethics in clinical care and research
  - Advance care planning
  - Consent and capacity
- Physical Environment
  - Environmental assessment
  - Elderly friendly design resources

## Conclusion:

Nursing officers from Primary Care and Emergency department play a role in contributing to improving the care of older people in acute healthcare settings. It is hoped that the workshop provided insights on the need and urgency to improve the care of older people in acute healthcare settings.