

## Opinion of Graduate Nurses on Pursuing ‘Geriatric Nursing’ Course as a Specialty – An Exploratory Study

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Nursing students’ desire to pursue ‘Geriatric nursing’ as a specialty in postgraduate study is a subject that is under-studied. This study was conducted to assess the opinion of graduate nurses on pursuing ‘Geriatric Nursing’ Course as a specialty.

**Methods:** An online opinionnaire in the form of Google form was used to survey the participants on pursuing ‘Geriatric Nursing’ as a specialty. The data was collected from 26 June to 6th November 2020.

**Results:** 62.9% felt that the elderly people in India have very specific needs as compared to other age groups. 48.6% of the samples have re-iterated that Long term care is not optimal in the existing model of tertiary care hospitals. 49.1% feel that elderly engagement has to be incorporated in the existing Nursing curriculum in detail. 36.6% of the samples felt that currently there is no structured pathway of learning and development for nursing careers in elderly care whereas, 30.3% of them stayed neutral. 50.3% of the respondents expressed that they would work in a geriatric ward/facility only after gaining expertise in the field. 49.1% expressed that they would opt for this specialisation only if it attracted a good pay package.

**Conclusion:** Postgraduate education provides a deeper insight to the specialisation. Geriatric specialty is a not so famous choice among nurses aspiring to pursue their postgraduate studies. The government should take strong steps that the older age people in India must be taken care in the same manner as the children with utmost responsibility. Nurses working closely with the old age groups must get incentives and allowances as any other nurse working in an ICU or CCU.

### Keywords

Opinion, Graduate Nurses, Geriatric Nursing, Course, Specialty

### INTRODUCTION

Nursing profession is dynamic in many aspects. Nursing professional education is at par with the latest advancements and is abreast with the current trends. Postgraduate studies in Nursing is opted by many students who aim for a professional growth and development. There are various specializations that a student can opt when he / she is planning to pursue higher education in Nursing. They are Medical & Surgical Nursing, Community Health Nursing, Mental Health Nursing, Child Health Nursing and, Obstetrics & Gynaecological Nursing. Among the specialties mentioned here, there are sub-specializations under Medical & Surgical Nursing specialty. They are; i) Cardiac /CTVS nursing ii) Critical care nursing iii) Neurosciences nursing iv) Oncological nursing and, v) Nephrological nursing. Majority of the students opt for the said specialties as they have a lot of scope for growth. Students who opt to pursue their post-graduation have selective liking for certain specialties based on the job opportunities they see after completion of their professional studies. This study was conducted to understand the opinion of graduate nursing students as well as graduate nurses on selection of ‘Geriatric Nursing’ as a specialty under the postgraduate studies. Geriatrics / Geriatric Nursing is a sub-specialty under Medical Surgical Nursing that deals with the medical and surgical care of health conditions, specifically among old age people. It deals with all types of health issues a person would face during his old age.

### Objectives

- To understand the opinion of graduate nursing students on pursuing ‘Geriatric Nursing’ as a specialty
- To find association between opinion and selected demographic variables.

## METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach with analytical method was used to conduct this study. An online opinionnaire in the form of Google form was used to survey the participantson pursuing ‘Geriatric Nursing’ as a specialty. The data was collected from26 June to 6th November 2020. The questionnaire consisted of 24 questions: 5demographic variables, 18opinionnaire questions, and 1 open ended question.

## IMPLEMENTATION

An electronic questionnaire designed by the researcher in the form of a google form. It was pilot tested on 12 samples to get the reliability using the split-half method and the Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient was 0.81, which shows the opinionnaire was highly reliable. The questionnaire was distributed using Google Docs from 26 June to 6<sup>th</sup> November 2020, followed by three reminders, using emails.

## RESULTS

The collected data was analysed where the baseline demographic characteristics of the respondents are depicted in the Table 1. A total of 175 samples responded to the online questionnaire. The overall response rate found was 68.4% (175/256).

**Table 1: Baseline Characteristics of the Respondents**

				<b>n = 175</b>	
<b>1. Age in years</b>				<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
a)	18-20			62	35.4
b)	21-25			79	45.1
c)	26-30			11	6.3
d)	31-35			12	6.9
e)	36-40			5	2.9
f)	above 40			6	3.4
<b>2. Do you have any family member whose age is above 60 years?</b>				<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
a)	Yes			109	62.3
b)	No			66	37.7
<b>3. Will you opt for nursing assistance for your elderly family member in case of long-term illness?</b>				<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
a)	Yes			67	38.3
b)	No			40	22.9
c)	May be			68	38.9

**Table 2: Opinion of Undergraduate Nurses on Elderly Care**

Opinion Questions	Strongly Disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly Agree (5)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I feel that Old age people's needs are very different from that of any other age group people	38	21.7	13	7.4	14	8.0	38	21.7	72	41.1
Geriatric people need a special ward in a Hospital similar to the children's ward	29	16.6	22	12.6	34	19.4	44	25.1	46	26.3
Long term care is not optimal in the existing model of Tertiary care Hospitals	18	10.3	21	12.0	51	29.1	58	33.1	27	15.4

**Table 3: Opinion of Undergraduate Nurses on Nursing Curriculum**

Opinion Questions	Strongly Disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly Agree (5)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Geriatric problems are NOT well understood in the existing Nursing Curriculum	28	16	25	14.3	42	24.0	51	29.1	29	16.6
Elderly engagement has to be incorporated in the existing Nursing curriculum in detail	19	10.9	27	15.4	43	24.6	48	27.4	38	21.7
There is no current structured pathway of learning and development for nursing careers in elderly care	32	18.3	26	14.9	53	30.3	44	25.1	20	11.4

**Table 4: Opinion of Undergraduate Nurses on Professional Growth**

Opinion Questions	Strongly Disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly Agree (5)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I am searching for such a specialization for myself since a very long time	29	16.6	14	8.0	64	36.6	44	25.1	24	13.7
I am ready to work in the Geriatric field only after I gain expertise in this area of study	20	11.4	26	14.9	41	23.4	48	27.4	40	22.9
I am afraid that Geriatric Nurses will be paid less in future	34	19.4	27	15.4	46	26.3	32	18.3	36	20.6
I feel 'Geriatric / Gerontological Nursing' will be a lucrative choice w.r.t career development	16	9.1	21	12.0	45	25.7	48	27.4	45	25.7
I might take up Geriatric nursing as a profession only if it attracts good pay package	31	17.7	17	9.7	41	23.4	53	30.3	33	18.9
In India, I feel old age people are not taken much care as compared to foreign countries	24	13.7	20	11.4	21	12.0	43	24.6	67	38.3
I feel there is a necessity of Geriatric Nurses in Indian Community	32	18.3	20	11.4	17	9.7	42	24.0	64	36.6

**Table 5: Opinion of Undergraduate Nurses on Future of Geriatric Nursing/Nurse in our Society**

Opinion Questions	Strongly Disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly Agree (5)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%

I feel 'Geriatric / Gerontological Nursing' is much needed specialty in Nursing	32	18.3	10	5.7	23	13.1	45	25.7	65	37.1
I have old age person at my home and I am confident that I can take care of old age people given a chance	29	16.6	18	10.3	34	19.4	44	25.1	50	28.6
I like old age people but I don't want to take up this as a profession	34	19.4	31	17.7	46	26.3	40	22.9	24	13.7
Nurses currently working with elderly people are devalued w.r.t salary and incentives	23	13.1	24	13.7	63	36.0	43	24.6	22	12.6
Eventually, I feel that 'Geriatric Nurse Practitioner' will be the ultimate future of elderly care	28	16	23	13.1	42	24.0	47	26.9	35	20.0

## ELDERLY CARE

62.9% felt that the elderly people in India have very specific needs as compared to other age groups. 51.4% of the samples expressed that elderly care is very crucial and there should be a separate ward designated in all hospitals similarly as we get to see for children. 48.6% of the samples have re-iterated that Long term care is not optimal in the existing model of tertiary care hospitals.

## NURSING CURRICULUM

45.7% of the respondents were of opinion that the problems of the elderly are not well-understood in the current nursing curriculum. 49.1% feel that elderly engagement has to be incorporated in the existing Nursing curriculum in detail. 36.6% of the samples felt that currently there is no structured pathway of learning and development for nursing careers in elderly care whereas, 30.3% of them stayed neutral.

## PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

38.9% of the samples expressed that there are very few or equal to nil educational institutions that offer a specialisation in Geriatric Nursing. And even if it is there, they are too far away from their home towns. 50.3% of the respondents expressed that they would work in a geriatric ward/facility only after gaining expertise in the field. 49.1% expressed that they would opt for this specialisation only if it attracted a good pay package, whereas, 23.4% of them showed a neutral reaction. 38.9% of the samples said that they may be underpaid in future if opted to work in a geriatric facility, whereas 26.3% of them had a neutral side to this. 37.1% of the participants expressed that nurses currently working in the geriatric facilities are devalued w.r.t. salary and allowances/incentives.

## 'Geriatric Nursing' as a much needed Speciality in Professional Education

62.9% of the respondents expressed that there is a dire need for nurses to opt for Geriatrics as a specialty in nursing, whereas 18.3% of them disagreed to this notion. 53.1% of the samples were of opinion that Geriatric nursing would become a lucrative choice w.r.t. career development, whereas 25.7% gave a neutral opinion. 60.6% of the participants opined that Indian community has a crunch of Geriatric nurses. 62.9% of the respondents expressed that elderly in India are comparatively not taken care of as in foreign countries.

## **Future of Geriatric Nursing/Nurse in our Society**

53.7% of the respondents also were of opinion that they were confident to take care of elderly if given a chance. They already had an experience of caring for an elderly member in the family. 36.6% of the respondents expressed that they love to be with old age people but do not necessarily want to take it up as a profession, whereas 26.3% of them were neutral. 46.9% of the respondents felt that Geriatric Nurse Practitioner' will be the ultimate future of elderly care, whereas, 24% of them stayed neutral.

## **DISCUSSION**

Postgraduate education provides a deeper insight to the specialisation. Geriatric specialty is a not so famous choice among nurses aspiring to pursue their postgraduate studies. Students are rarely able to appreciate the complexity, challenge, and rewards of geriatric nursing.<sup>1</sup>According to a study, gerontological-nursing education was effective for nursing students to improve knowledge about dotards, change attitude positively.<sup>2</sup>

The train-the-trainer approach, Geriatric Nursing Education Consortium (GNEC) primary goal has been to support and empower baccalaureate-nursing faculty as they champion geriatric education, train other faculty, and oversee revision of the senior-level undergraduate curriculum at their home institutions.

## **CONCLUSION**

In India, there is a dire need for Geriatric nurses so that elderly can get better care. The government should take strong steps that the older age people in India must be taken care in the same manner as the children with utmost responsibility. Nurses working closely with the old age groups must get incentives and allowances as any other nurse working in an ICU or CCU. Only then India will be counted as a country with good facilities for its elderly population.

**Conflict of Interest** – Nil

**Source of Funding** – Nil

**Ethical Clearance** – Ethical clearance was obtained from ethical sub-committee of Symbiosis College of nursing.

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