IDENTIFYING CAREGIVER SKILLS

June Field Conway, Northeast Louisiana University[1]
Lillian Chenoweth, Texas Woman's University[2]

The purpose of this research was to gather data on necessary skills to care for non-institution-alized elderly based on perspectives of inter-disciplinary professionals. This information can then be used to formulate curriculum in home economics, a discipline traditionally interested in the family life cycle and its interaction with society.

INTRODUCTION

The task of giving care to elderly relatives has become more complicated with changing demo-graphics. Most elderly desire to continue living alone in their own homes and most do. The family of the future may be unable to continue being the primary support of the elderly in soci-ety, even though they remain the preferred care-giver.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive study used the survey method to send questionnaires to 225 professionals, who were members of three professional organizations of nurses, gerontologists, and home economists. The questionnaire asked respondents to rate 56 skills in caregiving identified through syllabi from a university home economics curriculum. A demographic data form was also included to help characterize the sample. These skills and questions were approved by a panel of judges. A pilot study was conducted and skills and demo-graphic data forms were approved. A high per-centage of questionnaires were returned by 60% of the nurses, 67% of the gerontologists, and 80% of the home economists. These questions were ana-lyzed using descriptive statistics of mean, medi-an, and standard deviation. Surveyed opinions of 155 respondents provided the data.

RECOMMENDATION

The findings included the identification of 35 important skills for caregivers of the non-institutionalized elderly. Results determined that the personal/family relations subject area was the most highly ranked one for necessary training, followed by home management/consumer education, and foods/nutrition. Skills in hous-ing and clothing and textiles were ranked as less important. It was recommended that a holistic multi-disciplinary approach be used with home economists providing expertise in the teaching of skills related to home economics with contribu-tions from other disciplines to strengthen and prepare caregivers for future demands.

---

[1]Assistant Professor of Home Economics
[2]Full Professor of Home Economics