IDENTIFYING CAREGIVER SKILLS

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The purpose of this research was to gather data on necessary skills to care for non-institutionalized elderly based on perspectives of interdisciplinary 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 demographics. 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 society, even though they remain the preferred caregiver.

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 demographic data forms were approved. A high percentage of questionnaires were returned by 60% of the nurses, 67% of the gerontologists, and 80% of the home economists. These questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean, median, 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 housing 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 contributions from other disciplines to strengthen and prepare caregivers for future demands.

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