

Cultural Daily

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The Aging Baby Boomer Population, Healthcare, and Community Outreach

Daphne Stanford · Wednesday, September 14th, 2016

Community outreach is a worthwhile and rewarding endeavor, especially when it comes to [the aging Baby Boomer population](#) and their families. For older adults, the ability to be self-sufficient is vital to maintaining a high level of dignity and independence.

For those of us trying to balance practical career concerns with community outreach, however, a balanced, realistic approach is crucial to success in the current job market. A career as a [Clinical Nurse Specialist](#), for example, strikes a balance between serving aging community members and advancing career options in nursing or healthcare administration. When working with elderly and Baby Boomer generations, it is of vital importance to respect the need for independence.

Reliable Sources of Healthcare Information

According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' [Administration for Community Living](#), "Persons 65 years or older...numbered 46.2 million in 2014 (the latest year for which data is available)." Moreover, by 2060, there is projected to be "about 98 million older persons, more than twice their number in 2014." If these numbers don't compel you to action, perhaps job security or social justice will. A role as a nurse practitioner or healthcare administrator at a community clinic fulfills both societal needs.

There are a number of reliable sources of information that a nurse practitioner at a community clinic might provide to patients, including pointing people in the direction of [reliable legislation-related websites](#) such as [CMS](#) (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid-Related Services), the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' website for [Health Information Privacy](#), and [The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#). All of these sites are specifically designed to be user-friendly and easy to navigate, which is a must when working with an aging population.

Electronic Healthcare Records (EHRs) & Prescription Drugs

Many community centers now offer computer and internet classes specifically designed for older adults. A degree specializing in gerontology addresses many overlapping concerns related to patient autonomy, privacy, data sharing, and healthcare informatics. The implementation of electronic healthcare records when prescribing multiple drugs to patients, for example, is of vital importance and can be the difference between life or death—especially when working with older patients whose immune systems tend to be more precarious than those of younger adults.

It's common knowledge that certain prescription drugs don't interact well together. When treating older populations, however, a miscalculation in drug interactions and side effects can mean the difference between cardiac arrest, seizures, or psychotic breaks—especially when dealing with multiple prescriptions. Patient-focused websites and well-documented electronic health records (EHRs) can greatly improve the quality, safety, and efficiency of medical treatment.

Because of this, nurse practitioners with a background in healthcare informatics are becoming the norm, rather than the exception. This is due, in part, to recent advances in healthcare legislation: Medicare, along with the Medicaid EHR Incentive Program's "[meaningful use](#)" initiative offers goal and treatment planning, workflow development, and budget or financial readiness for families and clinic workers alike.

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Ultimately, patient privacy, dignity, and independence are a collective concern. However, these new advancements in legislation facilitate ease of access to information for both patient families and community healthcare providers and nurse practitioners. We must educate ourselves about current healthcare legislation. Luckily for us, the recent advancements in healthcare informatics, data sharing, and community medicine bring knowledge and ease of access to the forefront.

Do you have a recent success story involving friends or family members navigating medical patient care, healthcare informatics, community outreach, or navigation of the Affordable Care Act? Share your experience in the comments section, below.

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