

DEVELOPING GERONTOLOGICAL NURSING COMPETENCIES: AN E-DELPHI STUDY

By Nicole Britten, Victoria Traynor, Tracey Osmond and Lynn Chenoweth

Background/Aim

In Australia, a total of 13% registered nurses (RNs) (40,443) work in aged care and therefore deserve special attention. Understanding the specific contribution of RNs in aged care is limited and aged care employers report that a “lack of specialist knowledge” among RNs is the main reason for unfilled RN vacancies (Deloitte Access Economics 2016).

This paper presents the findings from a study to develop Gerontological Nursing (GerNur) Competencies for RNs for use across Australian nursing homes and community care. A literature review of gerontological nursing competencies found that the only widely used competencies were published in the United States and irrelevant to the Australian care context. A group known as the Nursing in Aged Care Collaborative (NACC), made up of five not for profit aged care providers, undertook the study with the help of two universities to develop the GerNur Competencies (Figure 1).

Figure 1

NAME	ORGANISATION	POSITION
Kristene Rice	Anglicare	GM Quality and Service Support
Tracey Osmond	Scalabrini Village	Director, Clinical Governance and Quality
Jolan Stokes	HammondCare	Hammond College Manager, Health and Hospitals
Linda Justin	Uniting	Director of Practice and Quality
Carolyn Moir	BaptistCare	Care Improvement Consultant
Donna Lennon	BaptistCare	Care Improvement Consultant
Mary McConachie	Anglicare	Quality and Compliance Manager – Residential
Melissa Jansson	Anglicare	Nurse Educator, Quality and Service Support
Elaine Griffin	Scalabrini Village	Director, People, Learning and Culture
INVITEES		
Victoria Traynor	UoW	Professor
Nicole Britten	UoW	Project Manager
Lynn Chenoweth	UNSW	Professor of Nursing, Centre for Healthy Brain Ageing

Methods

This study was undertaken using an e-Delphi with a snowball sample made up of just over 400 participants. The e-Delphi technique was used successfully when dementia care competencies were developed by this same

research team (Traynor and Britten 2015). This e-Delphi started with 11 core competencies with 36 domains of practice generated from a literature review and workshop with senior practitioners working in aged care.

The e-Delphi consisted of five rounds of online consultation: Reviewing the wording of each core competency and its associated domains of practice (round one and two) and creating levels of practice (round three to five) for each of the domains of practice.

Content analysis of qualitative comments provided in the e-Delphi informed the final wording of the competencies and descriptive statistics were used to record percentage levels of agreements among the participants about the wording of the competencies and domains of practice.

Findings

The participants were clinicians (57%) and managers (30%) and academics (13%) from 10 countries (90% Australia). By round two, the final set of 11 core competencies and 36 domains of practice (Figure 2) generated a 98% (SD±2) level of agreement among the participants. By round five, two levels of practice were created to explain the competence in each of the domains of practice for RNs working with older people and their families- essential and enhanced (minimum level of 60% agreement achieved across the domains of practice).

Figure 2

CORE COMPETENCIES	
1	Living well for older people across communities and groups
2	Maximising health outcomes
3	Communicate effectively
4	Facilitating transitions in care
5	Facilitating choices within legal and ethical frameworks
6	Partnering with family carers
7	Promoting mental health and psychological wellbeing
8	Providing evidence based dementia care
9	Providing optimal pain management
10	Providing palliative care
11	Enabling access to technology

Conclusion

The GerNurs Competencies were endorsed through a wide consultation activity using the e-Delphi technique. Currently, a pilot implementation of the competencies across the NACC organisations is being undertaken to test the accompanying documentation to help RNs and their managers implement the GerNurs Competencies. During the implementation RNs and their managers were completing online surveys to evaluate the accompanying documentation to ensure it is appropriate for aged care in Australia. One RN implementing the GerNurs Competencies said it was, “Long overdue and will be of great value in development of future aged care leaders”. The GerNurs Competencies and accompanying documentation will be available by 2018 on an accessible website for use by individuals for their professional development and organisations to support implementation of their strategic plans.

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