

NRS 353

Gerontology and Gerontic Nursing Practice

Assignment item 1: Essay questions

Part 1: Australian sociality has developed particular attitudes towards the aged. Discuss the attitudes that are apparent from the readings. Now consider this issue of aged care from Japanese perspective.

Are these attitudes different in the modern Japanese culture.

Part 2: Discuss the specific reasons why aged care should be a specialist area within all modern societies.

Social attitudes toward older adults and necessity of specialist for aged care

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Question 1

A number of old people has dramatically increased in the world and it is expected number will increase (World Health Organization, p.6). This demographic change affects social rolls of older people. However, in spite of similar demographic trend, attitudes toward the old in each country slightly differ. It is going to be discussed the differences between modern societies in Australia and Japan.

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006), about 68% of old Australian rated their health as good or excellent. However, Australian society values youth and there is actually idea of ageism which is profound prejudice against old people. The idea related to ageism is believed by even some health professionals. Some younger people regard ageing as negative change, for example, being sickness, disability and dementia or burden on society (Brown & Alde, 2008, pp. 425-427).

Uniformly, Old people had to retire their jobs at 65 years of age. In contrast, today, practice in work place in Australia has been changed and many older people are actually working either full or part time. Moreover, they are now encouraged to contribute to workforce, because the supply of younger workers is going to decline and an aging population is increasing (Hunt, 2009, p. 220).

The vast majority of people live relatively independent until later in their life. More than 90% of people aged 65 years and older live in the community (Brooke & Kendig, 2004, p. 104). Most of older people live with their partners and the proportions living alone increase with age. It is estimated that “only 8% of older Australian live in non-private dwellings” (Hunt, 2009, p. 221). Even though some of older adults have disabilities, about three quarter of those people is receiving support both informal assistance and community service (Brooke & Kendig, 2004, p. 104). This can make it possible that older people live in the community.

In terms of attitudes toward old people in Japan, there are some similarities and differences. In a Japanese tradition, older people should be respected, but the idea might be myth today.

Extended family was common in Japan. There was a notion that wife have to care for her or husband's parents. However, a number of household which include only a person aged 65 or over and husband and wife who are 65 years old or over has dramatically increased (Bureau of Statistics, 2005). Then, the older people in Japan are required to live independently. This may be caused many people choose to live separately with their parents.

Traditionally, Japanese workers were required to resin their jobs at 60 years old. In 2004, Japanese government has enacted a law which encourages employers to extend retirement age from 60 to 65 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2004). Then the number of employers which have taken actions to employ workers over 60 years old has increased from 30.1% to 46.1% in period of 2004 to 2008 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2008). Many employers might reluctant to employ the older people, but with the law, the attitudes of employers may be changing.

In summary, the number of aging population is growing fast in Australia and Japan. These countries has been trying to adapt to the rapid change. Australians' value toward ageing may be still controversial. Japanese seem to devalue ageing in modern society. Overall, ageing is not perfectly accepted in these two countries. Becoming older is somewhat undervaluing, although there are some improvement of treatment toward the older.

Question 2

As mentioned, the population of older people is growing in modern society. Brooke and Kendig (2004) described the proportion of older people who need assistance increases with age. Additionally, the demand for aged care is expected to rise over the next twenty years. Factors which the older adults suffer from are different from those in other age groups. Therefore, there is a need for health professionals/nurses who have skills which can meet specific needs of the older people. It is going to be discussed that necessity of some aspect for specialists who are working aged care area.

The first reason why aged care needs the specialist is characteristics of older people. People experience changes throughout their life. When they become old, they will face significant changes such as decline of physical strength. Though older adults vary widely in their levels of functional ability (Hunt, 2009, p. 221), they tend to become frail and may have physical, cognitive or mental problems related to ageing. The health professionals should understand how being older possibly affect their health. This can help the nurses to realise specific problems aged people may have.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006) showed almost 100% of people over 65 years old have at least one chronic disease. The nurses need to know most old adults are living with diseases or disabilities. Also, kind of diseases which older people might have differs from these of younger generation. Hunt (2009) described common severe health problems which the older adults have activity limitations with; arthritis, hearing problems, cardiovascular diseases, cerebrovascular accidents. Hunt added dementia and cancer are the major contributors of profound illness for the old. For doing aged care, it is essential to understand major health problems older people suffer from. Then the nurses should know how to support older people who have such a condition.

Effective communication is one of important nursing skills. The nurses can obtain information of patients' well-being, provide appropriate information or develop rapport through communication (le

May, 2006, p. 167). Communicating with older adults may require specialised skills of communication, because the old people may have visual, auditory or speech impairment caused by ageing. This could be barrier for smooth communication. Moreover, some of older people have diseases which affect communicating such as dementia. Many younger people may feel difficulties to communicate with older people who have such a disease. Aged care professionals should have skills to have therapeutic communication with the older people who have trouble with communicating. It may be thought only specialised education and practice enable to have the skills.

In conclusion, older people tend to have particular health issues which are relevant to being older. Many of them are likely to have chronic diseases or disabilities which limit their daily activities or independency. Naturally, issues they have differ from those younger generations might have. Thus, it is necessary that health workers who are specialised aged care. They are expected to understand what problems the older people have and how to assist them to cope with the problems. Nursing for all ages is not uniform. It should be adapted for needs by individual age group.

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