GWEP Content Expert

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Ageism in America: Implications for Health Care

Exploring the impact of ageism on patients, providers, and the health care system.

What is Ageism?

- Definition: Stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination directed toward people based on their age.
- Common in society and health care settings.

Prevalence of Ageism

- Ageism is one of the most socially accepted forms of bias.
- Older adults often report feeling dismissed or overlooked in health care.
- Leads to disparities in treatment and outcomes.

Impact on Health Care

- Delayed diagnoses and under-treatment.
- Assumption that symptoms are 'normal aging.'
- Fewer preventive services offered.
- Reduced patient autonomy and dignity.

Examples in Clinical Practice

- Dismissal of pain as part of aging.
- Less aggressive treatment options offered to older adults.
- Exclusion from clinical trials.
- Limited discussion of mental health and sexual health.

Consequences for Patients

- Increased morbidity and mortality.
- Reduced quality of life.
- Lower adherence to treatment plans.
- Greater psychological distress.

Consequences for Health Systems

- Increased costs due to preventable complications.
- Misallocation of resources.
- Barrier to providing equitable care.

Combating Ageism in Health Care

- Education and awareness.
- Person-centered and age-friendly care models.
- Challenging stereotypes.
- Inclusion of older adults in decision-making.

Strategies for Providers

- Use respectful, non-diminutive language.
- Provide individualized care plans.
- Promote preventive and rehabilitative care.
- Encourage interprofessional collaboration.

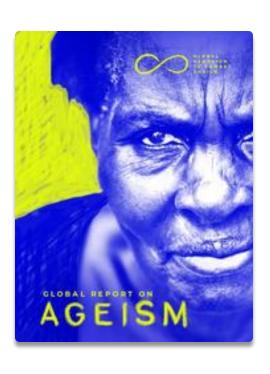
Policy and Advocacy

- Advocate for anti-ageism policies.
- Promote inclusion in research and education.
- Support Age-Friendly Health Systems initiative.

Case Study Discussion

- An 82-year-old patient with chest pain is told 'it's just aging.'
- How should the team respond differently?
- What are the risks of dismissing symptoms?

Resources



- World Health Organization Global Report on Ageism.
- Age-Friendly Health Systems Institute for Healthcare Improvement.
- National Institute on Aging resources.
- Scholarly references provided in APA format.

Optional Ending Discussion Prompts

- "What examples of ageism have you witnessed in your clinical practice?"
- "What small action could you take this week to reduce ageism in your unit or classroom?"
- "How can your institution become more age-friendly?"

Conclusion

- Ageism negatively impacts patients, providers, and systems.
- Awareness and action can improve care quality and equity.
- Every health professional has a role to play.

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