

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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