Addressing Current Demands in Geriatric Care: COVID-19 and the Workforce
SIG 15

INTRODUCTION

Four articles are contained within that address current demands in geriatric care, including impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shifting demographics reflecting an aging population.

First, Thomas et al. analyze eight interviews with caregivers of those with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). Authors conclude positive and negative themes that were specific to the pandemic and make suggestions that could result in improved perception of medical support and lower feelings of burden for ALS caregivers.

Next, Stead et al. investigate practice patterns, experiences, and changes in referrals to medically based SLPs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Authors analyze results of a survey of 208 SLPs and determine themes related to COVID-19 precautions, patient flow, patient characteristics, and mental health (staff, families, and patients). This incredibly detailed article uses three research questions to guide review and discussion, including what changes SLPs had seen in their caseloads since the onset of COVID-19; inquiry into experiences with COVID precautions; and inquiry into the impact that COVID has had on patients, caregivers, and practice overall.

Then, Heape examines the effect of social isolation and loneliness as a result of the pandemic, specifically in the especially vulnerable geriatric population. The author reviews existing research on social isolation and loneliness in the aging population, discusses current demographic data on the gaining population, considers principles of bioethics, and examines social determinants of health. She reveals a link between social isolation, loneliness, and negative outcomes, and suggests strategies to mitigate the negative effects of social isolation.

Finally, Watson et al. address the need for practice-ready geriatric health professionals as a result of unprecedented population growth of persons aged 65 years and older. The authors review 20 SLP student perceptions after visiting a senior mentor’s home in interprofessional practice teams of 3-4 over three semesters and completing assignments aimed at growing skills in geriatric collaborative care. Authors determine that moderate positive effects were observed in perceptions of interprofessional knowledge, attitudes, and skills. The results include discussion of predominantly positive attitudes toward older persons, an appreciation for the elderly, increased knowledge and skills in geriatric care, and an interest in working with older persons in the future.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
You will be able to:
- explain how the pandemic affected the caregivers of ALS patients
- discuss the perceived practice impacts of COVID-19 on medically based SLPs
• summarize at least three activity examples to mitigate the effects of social isolation and loneliness in the aging population
• identify elements of the Seniors Assisting in Geriatric Education (SAGE) Program that may contribute to SLP graduate students’ interest in and impact to their future practice with geriatrics

CONTENTS

The Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Caregiver Experience During the Pandemic: A Preliminary Qualitative Exploration and Reflection of Interview Data by Karin E. Thomas, Kathryn Lyndes, and Katie Jackson

The Impact of COVID-19 on Clinical Practice in Medically Based Settings: Speech-Language Pathologists’ Perspectives by Amanda Stead, Monica Vinson, Paul Michael, and Dane Frank

Loneliness and Social Isolation in Older Adults: The Effects of a Pandemic by Amber Heape

Enhancing SLP Students' Perceptions of Older Persons and Collaborative Practice Through Geriatric Interprofessional Teamwork by Jennifer B. Watson, Teresa Drulia, and Laurel Lynch

PROGRAM HISTORY and IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Start date: November 7, 2022
End date: November 7, 2027

To earn continuing education credit, you must complete the learning assessment on or before November 7, 2027.

This course is offered for 0.45 ASHA CEUs (Intermediate level, Professional area).