

Future health care specialists' opinion on aging processes

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It is expected that the number of elderly people (older than 65) will be rising. Also, according to the data of Latvia's strategic development in 2030 it is expected that already in 2020 there will be more retired people than children and young people under the age of 18. Elderly people are more disposed to diseases, they often face various chronic diseases and incapacity to work. There is a prognosis put forward that more and more elderly people will use health care and social services. Meeting the basic physical, mental and psychosocial needs of elderly people is closely related to the development of the country's policy and economy.

During the study process students acquire knowledge about aging theories and develop understanding about aging as a normal process of the human body, so that they can acquire skills to manage work with elderly people which is an important competence in the future professional activity when there is a need to respond to the patients' needs and when communicating.

In Latvia we cannot observe a high tolerance towards elderly people in general. Therefore it is very important to research future health care specialists', who are in their last study year, opinion on the aging process and elderly people. Research of this kind is being carried out in Latvia for the first time.

There are two instruments applied in the research process - Kogan (1966) attitudes scale towards elderly people and an adopted questionnaire (Nolan, M. R., Brown, J., Davies, S., Nolan, J. un Keady, J., 2006) with the authors' permission – health and social care students' attitude towards work with elderly people.

Conclusion. Research results show that future health care specialists' opinion about aging process cannot be taken unambiguously. Competence paradigm in theory and practice can differ from an individual point of view. Individual student's opinion is formed by both personal and family, and society's values, examples and stereotypes.

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