

Research Brief

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**ADVANCING GERONTOLOGICAL NURSING AT THE INTERSECTION OF AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES, HEALTH SYSTEMS, AND PUBLIC HEALTH****Keywords:** healthy aging, age-friendly communities, gerontological nursing, health systems**Purpose of the Study:** To explore how communities and health systems can promote healthy aging, particularly through the utilization of trained gerontological nurses.**Key Points:**

- ✓ Reputable national and international organizations outline aspects of age-friendly communities, specifically built and social environments, health systems, and public health.
- ✓ Gerontological nurses are important stakeholders in all aspects of age-friendly communities due to their training and skillsets to support the unique and varied needs of older adults.

**IMPORTANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Healthy aging is an important aspect of worldwide health as life expectancy continues to increase across the globe. The World Health Organization (WHO) supports healthy aging through its age-friendly communities initiative that includes 1,000 communities worldwide (including 500 in the US) that are committed to age-friendly principles. Specific aspects of age-friendly communities include built and social environments, age-appropriate health systems, and public health programs. Gerontological nurses are important stakeholders in all aspects of age-friendly communities due to their training and skillsets specific to supporting the unique and varied needs of older adults.

**Built and Social Environment**

WHO outlines these aspects of age-friendly communities...

- ✓ Accessible, safe outdoor spaces and buildings
- ✓ Affordable transportation alternatives
- ✓ Affordable housing
- ✓ Promoting social participation
- ✓ Respect and social inclusion
- ✓ Encouraging civil participation
- ✓ Communication and information catered to older adults
- ✓ Community support and health services

## Age-friendly Health Systems

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement outlines these tenants of age-friendly health care...

- ✓ **What matters:** Focus on what matters most by aligning care with older adults' personal goals
- ✓ **Medications:** Use age-friendly medications that do not interfere with other aspects of age-friendly care
- ✓ **Mental health:** Screen for various health disorders and discuss treatments as necessary
- ✓ **Mobility:** Discuss the safety, frequency, intensity, and duration of activities to ensure they are appropriate to older adults' abilities and health needs

## Age-friendly Public Health

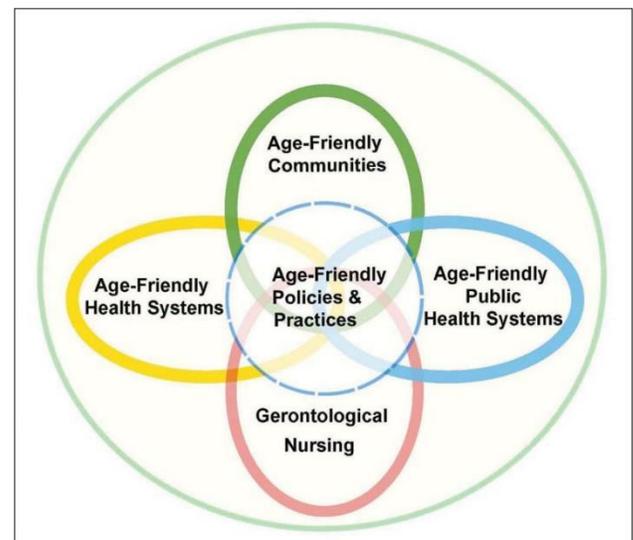
Trust for America's Health outlines these tenants of age-friendly public health...

- ✓ Gather and spread information to support the well-being of older adults
- ✓ Include older adults' input on issues
- ✓ Train and designate aging specialists
- ✓ Assess how public health programs serve older adults
- ✓ Adapt public health programs
- ✓ Ensure health emergency preparedness includes age-specific guidelines
- ✓ Participate in age-friendly public health
- ✓ Promote age-friendly communities
- ✓ Promote health systems to become age-friendly using the four aspects above

## PRACTICE AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

National and international leaders should consider implementing these aspects of age-friendly communities to improve quality of life and health outcomes among older adults.

**Gerontological nurses** are valuable assets who can help bolster these aspects of age-friendly communities. For example, they can contribute to public health programs by identifying priorities based on health trends, implementing health education campaigns, integrating social care into healthcare, and providing input on how public health can benefit older adults.



## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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