UNIT 1: The Phenomenon of Aging

Unit Overview


   The author points out the ever-growing number and percentage of the American population comprising persons 65 years of age and above. Further, she observes that those over 65 are living longer than previous generations. Currently, those 85 and older are the fastest growing segment of the elderly population.

2. You Can Stop "Normal" Aging, Dr. Henry S. Lodge, Parade, March 18, 2007

   The author argues that most aging is just dry rot we program into our cells by sedentary living, junk food, and stress. He offers a number of suggestions for what any individual could do to slow the aging process and live a much healthier life.

3. Living Longer: Diet and Exercise, Donna Jackson Nakazawa and Susan Crandell, AARP The Magazine, September/October 2006

   These articles point out the current findings in the areas of diet and exercise, that if followed, would increase the individual’s life expectancy by a number of years.

4. Secrets to Longevity, Cathy Gulli, Maclean’s, May 26, 2008

   The author maintains that the "blue zones" are places where people have the longest lifespans. The author gives the reasons why people live longer in these areas and what we could do to emulate their lifestyle and hopefully longevity.

5. Will You Live to Be 100?, Thomas Perls and Margery Hutter Silver, Living to 100, 1999

   After completing a study of 150 centenarians, Harvard Medical School researchers Thomas Perls and Margery Hutter Silver developed a quiz to help calculate one’s estimated life expectancy.


   The author points out that much of the human body contains self-renewing stem cells. Scientists are now wondering whether changes in the bodies’ stem cells over time contributes to those physical characteristics that we consider to be the signs of aging.

UNIT 2: The Quality of Later Life

Unit Overview

7. Failure to Thrive: Interventions to Improve Quality of Life in the Older Adult, Becky Dormer, Today’s Dietitian, August 2006

   Older persons who are lonely, bored, and depressed often withdraw socially and don’t eat properly, which results in weight loss, weakness, and functional decline. The author discusses what can be done to combat the conditions...
that are associated with "Failure to Thrive" symptoms in older adults.

8. Overweight and Mortality among Baby Boomers—Now We’re Getting Personal, Tim Byers, New England Journal of Medicine, August 24, 2006

The author discusses a number of the studies of the dangers of being overweight on a person’s health as well as the advantages of calorie restriction for improving one’s health.


Harvard Medical School has developed a quiz that older persons can take to determine the number of health risks they are experiencing and how these are likely to affect their chances for survival or mortality.

10. We Can Control How We Age, Lou Ann Walker, Parade, September 16, 2001

A Harvard study followed individuals from their teens into their eighties, and as a result, gives specific recommendations for what individuals can do to improve their chances of aging well.

UNIT 3: Societal Attitudes toward Old Age

Unit Overview


The author contends that young and healthy adults often avoid spending time with old persons because it reminds them that someday they too are going to get old and die. Moreover, she contends that negative views of the aging process are portrayed in the media and expressed through the use of pejorative words to describe the elderly.


The author examines how stereotypes of aging influence the older person’s physical and mental health. She observes how many older persons have internalized negative stereotypes of aging during the younger years and have difficulty discarding these negative views during their later life.


The author examines the belief and stereotypes that view older Americans as lonely, isolated, and unhappy. The findings of a number of different studies that raise questions about the accuracy of these beliefs are presented.


The author points out that, in a legal system slanted toward employers, many of the biases and negative stereotypes of older workers still perpetuate. Moreover, society’s lack of concern for this type of discrimination may prove costly as the workforce ages and older workers are more in demand to fill critical work roles.

UNIT 4: Problems and Potentials of Aging

Unit Overview

15. Alzheimer’s—The Case for Prevention, Oliver Tickell, The Ecologist, March 10, 2007

The author reviews current scientific findings that indicate what could be done in the areas of diet, nutrition, and lifestyle to reduce the individual’s risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease.


The author points out that current research efforts are attempting to locate the specific adult stem cell that could be both the cause and the cure for a host of different cancers found throughout the body.


Kyle Brown points out the problems confronted by many older persons when they turn over the control of their finances and property to their children. Exploitation and abuse of elders by their children has become more widespread than ever imagined. Moreover, there are numerous and often insurmountable difficulties confronted by older persons attempting to resolve these problems.

18. The Extent and Frequency of Abuse in the Lives of Older Women and Their Relationship with Health
The authors point out that nearly half of the women in the study had experienced at least one type of abuse—psychological/emotional, control, threat, physical or sexual—since turning 55 years old. Many women experienced multiple types of abuse and experienced abuse often.

UNIT 5: Retirement: American Dream or Dilemma?

Unit Overview

19. Retire Right, Consumer Reports, February 2008

The findings of a survey of 6,700 retirees, who answered questions about their retirement decisions and what did and didn’t work for them, are reported in this article.


The author lists and explains the five steps that a person should take throughout his or her adult life to ensure an adequate retirement income.


The article points out the advantages to the business community of employing older workers. The popular myths of older workers experiencing declining energy and productivity as well as being less reliable and loyal to the company are examined.


The author points out that many employers are ending their traditional "defined benefit" pension plans that were based on the employees' salary and replacing them with 401(k) defined contribution plans in which employees contribute a percentage of their pay and bear much of the risk of investing the principal. The problems of having an adequate retirement income with the new defined contribution retirement plans are discussed.

23. Work/Retirement Choices and Lifestyle Patterns of Older Americans, Harold Cox et al., Journal of Applied Sociology, Number 1, 2001

This article reviews six different patterns of work, retirement, and leisure from which people of retirement age may choose. Measures of life satisfaction are given to participants in each of the six groups to determine who are most satisfied with their lives.

UNIT 6: The Experience of Dying

Unit Overview


The article outlines the history of palliative care in the United States. Many of the current problems of palliative care are presented, including the need for regulatory changes, workforce issues, improving access to care, and improving the quality of palliative care.


The authors outline and describe the stages of grief that the individual goes through after experiencing the death of a loved one.


The authors questioned a large sample of people regarding their end of life preferences. Their sample included both people from the general community and a smaller group of those suffering from a terminal illness. The conditions they would prefer in their death for both the general public and those suffering from a terminal illness are presented.

27. Mind Frames towards Dying and Factors Motivating Their Adoption by Terminally Ill Elders, Tracy A. Schroepfer, Journals of Gerontology, vol. 61B, no. 3, 2006

The author lists and describes six mind frames people can hold regarding their own death once they
recognize that they are terminally ill. These range from neither ready nor accepting of their own death to considering a hastened death with a specific plan in mind.

UNIT 7: Living Environment in Later Life

Unit Overview


Most states have some form of home care services designed to assist older persons to remain in their current homes rather than moving them to a nursing home. While most states are experiencing a serious shortfall of funds to maintain the home services, the cost of placing these persons in a nursing home is astronomically higher. How will the states confront and solve the problem of funding home and health care services for their elderly citizens?

29. Where to Live as We Age, Susan Fine, Parade, May 31, 2009

The article explains the advantages for seniors who live in the Green House Home rather than the traditional nursing home. Each person has his or her own room and bath located around a sunny area with a big dining room table. The aim is to make living conditions more like a home and less like an institution.


Choosing the right place to live is complex and problematic for sons and daughters who make this decision for aging parents. The choices available from moving a parent in with you, to a continuing care retirement community, or to assisted living residences and nursing homes are discussed in this article.


Boston’s Beacon Hill was a residential neighborhood that the residents have now turned into a nonprofit association, which helps its 320 members with virtually any service they need on a 24-hour basis for a discounted fee. The goal for establishing the nonprofit association was to allow people to live in their current homes for the rest of their lives.

UNIT 8: Social Policies, Programs, and Services for Older Americans

Unit Overview


The author examines how the retirement age of people in different countries throughout the world affects their economic stability and growth as well as the solvency of their retirement programs. The growing older population in the United States and its impact on Social Security benefits is seen as a problem that is not currently being addressed by the government.


The author points out that Social Security is among the nation’s most long-lived and successful programs. He disputes some of the major criticisms of the program and argues that the program will remain solvent and continue to provide a measure of security for aged persons, survivors, and disabled persons well into the future.

34. The Corporate Beneficiaries of the Medicare Drug Benefit, Dean Baker, Multinational Monitor, September/October 2006

The author examines how the privatization of the medical drug benefit program imposed large costs on seniors, people with disabilities, the government, and health care providers. Moreover, the author argues that the decision to only provide the benefit through private insurers increased both the cost and complexity of the program.

35. Coverage for All, Patricia Barry, AARP Bulletin, July/August 2006

The author points out the advantages that a universal health care program would offer for Americans. The recently approved universal health care programs in the states of Massachusetts and Vermont are seen as moves in the direction of universal coverage and may well be a predictor of the future direction of and change in health care coverage and costs.

Given the problems of the demise of many pension and retirement programs, the author proposes a **universal savings system** that is mandatory and could prove to be as durable as Social Security.


The author points out that the United States spends about $8000 per person on health care—more than twice as much as Western countries that have universal health coverage and better medical results. A number of different **medical practices are proposed that would improve health care and lower costs**.

38. As Good as It Gets, Mike Edwards, *AARP The Magazine*, November/December 2004

The author **compares 16 nations from around the world for how well they provided retirement incomes, home care, health care, prescription drugs, and related services to their senior citizens**. The Netherlands ranked at the top in terms of government benefits provided to its older citizens.


The article points out what would have to be done in terms of current social service programs and federal taxation to **maintain the programs and to hold the government deficit to a level that is no larger than it is today in the year 2050**.

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