

Older Adult Summary

The role of the GP in the care of older adults

As a GP, your role is to:

- Diagnose, investigate and manage older adults taking into account theories of ageing, differences in epidemiology and risk factors of disease in the elderly population. Consider the physical, psychological and social changes that may occur with age
- Communicate appropriately with patients, their families and carers, recognising potential challenges in communicating with older patients. When necessary, balance confidentiality with the need for information and shared decision making
- Coordinate with other organisations and professionals (e.g. community nurses, social services, rehabilitation, care homes, voluntary sectors) whilst taking an advocacy position for the patient or family when needed, including for palliative and end-of-life care planning
- Review medications and repeat prescriptions effectively, potentially working with pharmacists. Consider the factors associated with drug treatment in the older adult (e.g. changes to the physiology of absorption, metabolism and excretion of drugs and the hazards posed by multiple prescribing, non-compliance and iatrogenic disease)
- Offer advice and support patients, relatives and carers regarding prevention, monitoring and self-management. Ensure care promotes patients' sense of identity, independence, personal dignity and that the patient is not discriminated against as a result of their age.

Key Areas for Examination Preparation

Common and important conditions

- Cancer: recognise the common, early, 'red flag' symptoms and signs of malignancy (e.g. weight loss, dysphagia, melaena, diaphoresis etc.), many of which may be non-specific if taken in isolation. Many cancers are more prevalent in the elderly population and may be insidious
- Cardiovascular: atrial fibrillation, heart failure, hypertension, ischaemic heart disease, risks for stroke and dementia
- Co-morbidity, difficulties in communicating, polypharmacy, malnutrition, social isolation and the need for additional support for the increasingly dependent patients in general practice are important issues and can delay the early recognition of adverse clinical patterns in older people
- End-of life care: moral, ethical and emotional issues relating to the end of life as well as after death (e.g. living wills, palliative care) (see also RCGP Topic Guide on *People at the End-of- Life*)
- Musculoskeletal: falls, fractures, gait disorders, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis
- Neglect and abuse (emotional, mental and physical) in the elderly.
- Neurological: Parkinson's disease, stroke and confusion
- Psychiatric: anxiety and depression, delirium (hyperactive, hypoactive or mixed) and Dementia (including vascular, Alzheimer's and Lewy Body and the importance of avoiding antipsychotics with the latter). Early use of anticholinergics where appropriate. The effects of these conditions on the person, the family and community, and the effects of physical function on the patient's mental state (See RCGP Topic Guide on *Mental Health*)
- Renal: chronic kidney disease (CKD), hydration
- Respiratory: COPD
- Skin pruritus, ulcers skin malignancies, lichen sclerosus, benign lesions associated with ageing
- Urogenital: infections, incontinence, LUTS, benign prostatic hypertrophy

Suggested Resources:

General information

- Bogosh CW. *The Golden Years: Healthy Aging and the Older Adult* CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (19 May 2013) [Paperback]
- Bowker L, Price J, Smith S. *Oxford Handbook of Geriatric Medicine* Oxford Medical Handbooks [Paperback] 2012
- Burke M, Laramie M, Joy A. *Primary Care of the Older Adult* London: Mosby, 2000
- Department of Health. *The National Service Framework for Older People* London: Department of Health, 2001
- Department of Health, Social and Public Safety. *Investing For Health* Belfast: Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2002
- Department of Health, Social and Public Safety. *A Healthier Future: a twenty-year vision for health and wellbeing in Northern Ireland 2005-2025* Belfast: Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2005
- Gosney M, Harper A, Conroy S. *Oxford Desk Reference: Geriatric Medicine* (Oxford Desk Reference Series) Oxford: OUP (12 July 2012) [Hardcover]
- Ofman JJ, Badamgarav E, Henning JM, Knight K, Gano AD Jr, Levan RK, *et al.* Does disease management improve clinical and economic outcomes in patients with chronic diseases? A systematic review *American Journal of Medicine* 2004; 117(3): 182–92
- Schellevis FG, van der Velden J, van de Lisdonk EH, van Eijk JTM, van Weel C. Co-morbidity of chronic diseases in general practice *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology* 1993; 46: 463–73
- Silagy C. *Oxford Textbook of Primary Medical Care*. Oxford: OUP New Ed edition (7 April 2005)
- Simon C, Everitt H and van Dorp F. *Oxford Handbook of General Practice (3rd edn)* Oxford Medical Handbooks. Oxford OUP (17 Dec 2009)
- Warrell D, Cox TM, Firth JD, Benz EJ (eds). *Oxford Textbook of Medicine (5th edn)* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010
- Whitfield K, Baker T. *Handbook of Minority Aging* Springer Publishing Co Inc (30 Aug 2013) [Paperback]
- Williams I. *Caring for Older People in the Community* Oxford: Radcliffe Medical Press, 1995
- Woodford H. *Essential Geriatrics (2nd revised edn)* Radcliffe Publishing Ltd, 2010
- www.ageuk.org.uk
- www.alzheimers.org.uk
- www.bgs.org.uk
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/quality-standards-for-care-services-for-older-people>
- www.e-GP.org

Cancer:

- gponline.com red flags,
- <https://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/suspected-cancer-recognition-and-referral>
- https://www.macmillan.org.uk/images/ace-vague-symptoms-exec-summary_tcm9-312470.pdf
- [https://www.nice.org.uk/search?om=\[\[%22drm%22:\[%22Last%20year%22\]\]\]&ps=50&q=ng12&sp=on](https://www.nice.org.uk/search?om=[[%22drm%22:[%22Last%20year%22]]]&ps=50&q=ng12&sp=on)

Atrial fibrillation

- patient.info.uk >doctor >atrial fibrillation,
- nice.cks.org.uk >atrial fibrillation,

Heart failure

- <https://www.cardiomyopathy.org/medical-professionals/mp>
- <https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/professionals/palliative-care-knowledge-zone/condition-specific-short-guides/heart-failure>
- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/heart-failure-chronic>

Hypertension

- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/hypertension-not-diabetic>
- <https://patient.info/doctor/hypertension>
- <http://www.bpassoc.org.uk>

Ischaemic heart disease

- <https://www.gpnotebook.co.uk/simplepage.cfm?ID=2080768009>
- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/angina>
- <https://www.gov.uk/ischaemic-heart-disease-and-driving>

Risks for stroke and dementia

- <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/stroke>
- <https://www.gov.uk/stroke-and-driving>
- <http://www.gpnotebook.co.uk/simplepage.cfm?ID=-2127232948&linkID=61139&cook=no&mentor=1> modifiable risk factors for stroke

Co-morbidity

- https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3074568/reports-and-briefings/health--wellbeing/communication_difficulties_in_the_elderly
- [rb_june15_lonelines_in_later_life_evidence_review.pdfhttps:// www.ageuk.org.uk/latest-news/archive/beat-social-isolation-and-live-longer/](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/latest-news/archive/beat-social-isolation-and-live-longer/)
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3864987/> -article on polypharmacy
- <https://www.mdedge.com/clinicianreviews/article/157265/geriatrics/polypharmacy-elderly-how-reduce-adverse-drug-events>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3396084/>
[https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/malnutrition in the elderly](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/malnutrition_in_the_elderly)

End of-lifecare:

- <https://bjgp.org/content/65/639/532> ten commandments for patient entered care
- <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/money-legal/legal-issues/advance-decisions/>
- <https://www.gpnotebook.co.uk/simplepage.cfm?ID=1060438084&linkID=49089> palliative care-many links to up to date information.
- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/palliative-care-general-issues>
- <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/about-us/health-professionals/resources/practical-tools-for-professionals> many links to training resources for professionals

Falls

- <https://gpnotebook.co.uk/simplepage.cfm?ID=-1093664762> falls and links
- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/falls-risk-assessment>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3135440/fractures>, article looking at causes of falls in the elderly
- <https://www.rcpe.ac.uk/sites/default/files/anderson.pdf> summary article

Gait disorders,

- [https://www.evidence.nhs.uk/search?om=\[%7B%22srn%22:\[%22Clinical%20Knowledge%20Summaries%20-%20CKS%22\]%7D,%7B%22srn%22:\[%22Patient%22\]%7D\]&q=Gait+ataxia&sp=on](https://www.evidence.nhs.uk/search?om=[%7B%22srn%22:[%22Clinical%20Knowledge%20Summaries%20-%20CKS%22]%7D,%7B%22srn%22:[%22Patient%22]%7D]&q=Gait+ataxia&sp=on) article with links with CKS on up to date national guidelines.

- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/falls-risk-assessmentosteoporosis>,

Osteoarthritis

- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/osteoarthritis>
- <https://www.arthritis-care.org.uk/living-with-arthritis>

Neglect and Abuse

- <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/abuse/elder-abuse-and-neglect.htm>
- [reporting abuse](https://www.gov.uk/report-abuse-of-older-person)
- [summary article of evidence available](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3660245/)

Parkinson's disease

- [stroke and confusion](https://cks.nice.org.uk/parkinsons-disease)
- [links to relevant info](https://www.gpnotebook.co.uk/simplepage.cfm?ID=-751501312)
- [info for pts and professionals](https://www.parkinsons.org.uk)
- <https://www.gov.uk/parkinsons-disease-and-driving>

Delirium

- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/delirium>

Anxiety and depression

- <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/conditions-illnesses/depression-anxiety/>
- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/depression>
- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/generalized-anxiety-disorder>
- <https://www.gywmind.org.uk>

Dementia

- Where Memories Go by Sally Magnusson-brilliant book describing the subtle onset of dementia in Sally's Mum, how it developed and how they cared for their Mum, great insight into how families try to manage.
- Three things About Elsie by Joanna Cannon-a brilliant book from inside this lady's head about her life, what she remembers about it and why.
- Elizabeth is Missing Emma Healey-a brilliant book describing the struggle for the words to be understood.
- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/dementia>
- (including vascular, Alzheimer's and Lewy Body and the importance of avoiding antipsychotics with the latter). Early use of anticholinergics where appropriate. The effects of these conditions on the person, the family and community, and the effects of physical function on the patient's mental state (See RCGP Topic Guide on *Mental Health*)

Chronic kidney disease (CKD)

- [hydration](https://cks.nice.org.uk/chronic-kidney-disease)
- <https://www.nutrition.org.uk/nutrition-science/life/dehydration-elderly.html>
- <https://www.europeanhydrationinstitute.org/hydration-for-elderly-people.html>

Respiratory

- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease>
- <https://patient.info/chest-lungs/chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease-leaflet>- useful info for explaining to patients about the condition

Skin

- <https://www.dermnetnz.org/topics/differential-diagnosis-of-itchy-skin/ulcers,-> great resource for all things skin plus quizzes too
- <https://www.dermnetnz.org/topics/skin-cancer/>
- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/pruritus-vulvae> benign lesions associated with ageing
- <https://patient.info/womens-health/vulval-problems-leaflet/lichen-sclerosus>
- <https://www.bad.org.uk/shared/get-file.ashx?id=291&itemtype=document> patient info leaflet

Urogenital

- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/urinary-tract-infection-lower-women>
- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/urinary-tract-infection-lower-men>
- <https://patient.info/doctor/urinary-incontinence-pro>
- LUTS, benign prostatic hypertrophy
- <https://cks.nice.org.uk/luts-in-men>
- [https://prostatecanceruk.org-self help patient info](https://prostatecanceruk.org-self-help-patient-info)