

## Review Article

# Geriatric Nursing: Current Trends, Practices, and Future Directions

Anika Diwedi<sup>1</sup>, Monika Singh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Laxmi College of Nursing, India

## I N F O

**Corresponding Author:**

Monika Singh, Laxmi College of Nursing, India

**E-mail Id:**

monika@s67gmail.com

**How to cite this article:**

Diwedi A, Singh M. Geriatric Nursing: Current Trends, Practices, and Future Directions. *Ind J Adv Nurs Care Health Stud.* 2025;1(1):4-9.

Date of Submission: 2025-02-28

Date of Acceptance: 2025-03-18

## A B S T R A C T

Geriatric nursing plays a critical role in addressing the unique healthcare needs of the aging population, which is steadily increasing worldwide, including in India. The role of geriatric nurses in providing comprehensive care—ranging from chronic disease management to palliative care—is discussed, with an emphasis on person-centered care, multidisciplinary team approaches, and the integration of technology in care delivery. Despite the advancements, challenges such as inadequate training, understaffing, cultural barriers, and ageism persist, hindering the quality of care for older adults. Looking forward, the development of specialized roles such as geriatric nurse practitioners, expanded use of telehealth, and increased emphasis on research and policy advocacy are seen as key to addressing these challenges.

**Keywords:** Geriatric Nursing, Elderly Care, Chronic Disease Management

## Introduction

As the world's population continues to age, geriatric care has emerged as an essential field within healthcare. In India, the growing elderly population, characterized by complex health needs and multiple comorbidities, has made geriatric nursing a critical area of focus. Geriatric nursing is a specialized field that focuses on providing healthcare to older adults, addressing the physical, mental, and social aspects of aging. The increasing prevalence of chronic diseases, cognitive decline, and the need for long-term care necessitates advanced nursing skills and strategies tailored to the elderly. This review article examines the role of geriatric nursing, current practices, challenges faced by nurses, and the future directions of this specialized field.<sup>1</sup>

## The Role of Geriatric Nursing

Geriatric nursing plays a vital role in delivering specialized care to older adults, who often face multiple health challenges due to aging, chronic diseases, and functional impairments. Nurses in this field are responsible for assessing the physical, emotional, and psychological

well-being of elderly patients, ensuring that their unique needs are met with compassion and expertise. A key responsibility of geriatric nurses is managing chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and arthritis, while also addressing cognitive impairments like dementia and Alzheimer's disease.<sup>2</sup> These nurses monitor patients' health status, coordinate care among multidisciplinary teams, and educate patients and their families on effective management strategies. In addition to clinical care, geriatric nurses advocate for the elderly, ensuring they have access to necessary services, support, and legal rights. They also play an essential role in providing palliative and end-of-life care, focusing on comfort and dignity. By fostering a holistic, person-centered approach, geriatric nurses significantly enhance the quality of life for older adults, promoting both independence and well-being in the face of complex health conditions.<sup>3</sup>(Table 1) Their roles include:

- **Assessment and Monitoring:** Geriatric nurses are trained to assess the physical and mental health status of elderly patients. This includes regular monitoring for cognitive decline, functional disabilities, mobility issues,

and the management of comorbidities like diabetes, hypertension, and arthritis.

- **Chronic Disease Management:** Nurses provide ongoing care for older adults suffering from chronic diseases, helping them manage symptoms, medication regimens, and lifestyle modifications to prevent exacerbation of conditions.<sup>4</sup>
- **Palliative and End-of-life Care:** Many elderly patients require palliative care to manage pain and improve the quality of life during the final stages of illness. Nurses play a vital role in providing compassionate care, ensuring comfort, and supporting both the patient and their family members.
- **Patient Education:** Nurses provide education to older adults and their families on managing chronic conditions, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and preventing falls or other accidents. They also educate family members on caregiving techniques and how to cope with the demands of caring for elderly relatives.
- **Advocacy and Empowerment:** Geriatric nurses advocate for the elderly, ensuring they have access to appropriate healthcare services, social support, and legal rights. They empower older adults to make informed decisions about their health and well-being.<sup>5</sup>

### Current Trends in Geriatric Nursing

- **Person-Centered Care (PCC):** One of the significant shifts in geriatric care is the emphasis on person-centered care, which focuses on the individual's unique needs, preferences, and values. Nurses in geriatric settings work closely with patients and their families to ensure that care is tailored to the individual's specific needs. This approach enhances patient satisfaction and outcomes.
- **Multidisciplinary Team Approach:** Due to the complex health issues facing the elderly, a team-based approach is essential. Nurses collaborate with other healthcare professionals, such as physiotherapists, dietitians, social workers, and doctors, to provide holistic care. This team-based approach is particularly effective in managing multiple chronic conditions, reducing hospital readmission rates, and improving the quality of life.<sup>10,11</sup>
- **Technological Integration:** The integration of technology into geriatric care is transforming the way care is provided. Electronic health records (EHRs), telemedicine, remote patient monitoring, and wearable devices for tracking vital signs have made it easier for nurses to monitor elderly patients' health. Technology also facilitates communication between the patient, caregivers, and healthcare team, improving continuity of care.
- **Fall Prevention Programs:** Falls are one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality among the elderly. Nurses are trained in implementing fall prevention programs that include environmental modifications, strength and balance exercises, medication reviews, and patient education. These programs are vital in reducing the incidence of falls and improving the overall safety of elderly patients.
- **Cognitive and Mental Health Care:** As dementia and other cognitive impairments become more common in the elderly population, there is an increasing focus on providing mental health support. Nurses in geriatric care settings are trained to recognize the signs of cognitive decline, manage behavioral and psychological symptoms, and work with families to create supportive environments for patients with dementia.<sup>12,13</sup> (Table 2)

**Table 1. Role Description Key Responsibilities<sup>6,7,8,9</sup>**

Assessment and Monitoring	Regularly assessing the physical, emotional, and mental health status of elderly patients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conducting comprehensive health assessments</li> <li>- Monitoring chronic conditions and functional decline</li> </ul>
Chronic Disease Management	Managing long-term conditions and preventing complications associated with aging.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coordinating care for chronic illnesses like diabetes, hypertension, and arthritis</li> <li>- Medication management</li> </ul>
Palliative and End-of-life Care	Providing comfort and dignity to patients in their final stages of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Managing pain and symptoms</li> <li>- Offering emotional support to patients and families</li> </ul>
Patient Education	Educating patients and their families about managing health conditions and maintaining independence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing education on self-care techniques</li> <li>- Instructing on lifestyle changes and disease prevention</li> </ul>
Multidisciplinary Collaboration	Collaborating with other healthcare professionals to provide holistic care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Working with physicians, physiotherapists, social workers, and dietitians</li> <li>- Coordinating care plans</li> </ul>

Advocacy and Empowerment	Ensuring elderly patients' rights and access to necessary services and support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advocating for the elderly in healthcare and legal matters</li> <li>- Empowering patients to make informed decisions</li> </ul>
Safety and Fall Prevention	Identifying and addressing risks to ensure patient safety, particularly concerning falls and accidents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementing fall prevention strategies</li> <li>- Modifying the environment for safety</li> </ul>
Cognitive and Mental Health Care	Identifying and managing mental health issues such as dementia and depression in elderly patients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assessing cognitive function</li> <li>- Offering mental health support and interventions</li> </ul>

**Table 2. Current Trends in Geriatric Nursing<sup>14,15</sup>**

Trend	Description	Impact on Geriatric Nursing
Person-Centered Care (PCC)	An approach that prioritizes the individual needs, preferences, and values of elderly patients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improves patient satisfaction and engagement</li> <li>- Enhances the quality of care by focusing on individual needs</li> </ul>
Multidisciplinary Team Approach	Collaboration among various healthcare professionals (e.g., physicians, therapists, dietitians, social workers).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides holistic care</li> <li>- Improves health outcomes and reduces hospital readmission rates</li> </ul>
Telehealth and Remote Monitoring	The use of telemedicine and technology to monitor elderly patients' health remotely.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increases access to care, particularly for rural patients</li> <li>- Enables continuous monitoring and early intervention</li> </ul>
Fall Prevention Programs	Programs designed to reduce the risk of falls among elderly patients, which are common in aging populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reduces fall-related injuries and hospitalizations</li> <li>- Improves patient safety and mobility</li> </ul>
Cognitive and Mental Health Care	Focus on addressing mental health issues, including dementia, depression, and anxiety, in elderly patients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhances quality of life for patients with cognitive impairments</li> <li>- Reduces caregiver stress and burden</li> </ul>
Age-Friendly Healthcare Systems	Designing healthcare services that cater specifically to the needs of older adults, emphasizing accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improves patient access to healthcare services</li> <li>- Enhances the care experience for older adults</li> </ul>
Technology Integration in Care	Use of health technologies such as electronic health records (EHRs), wearables, and mobile health apps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improves care coordination and communication</li> <li>- Facilitates accurate, real-time health data for better decision-making</li> </ul>
Chronic Disease Management	A focus on managing chronic illnesses prevalent among the elderly, such as diabetes, hypertension, and arthritis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhances disease control and symptom management</li> <li>- Reduces healthcare costs through preventive care efforts</li> </ul>
Palliative and Hospice Care	Expanding the role of nurses in providing palliative care, focusing on comfort and quality of life at the end of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improves end-of-life care and patient comfort</li> <li>- Supports families through difficult transitions</li> </ul>

## Challenges in Geriatric Nursing

- **Inadequate Training and Education:** Geriatric care requires specialized knowledge and skills, but many nursing programs still lack adequate focus on geriatric care. The shortage of advanced training programs in geriatric nursing results in a workforce that may be ill-equipped to manage the complex needs of the aging population.
- **Understaffing and Workload:** The demand for geriatric care is increasing, yet many healthcare systems face challenges such as understaffing and high nurse-to-patient ratios. These issues can lead to burnout among nurses and impact the quality of care provided to elderly patients.<sup>16</sup>
- **Cultural Barriers:** India is a country with diverse cultures, and caregiving practices can vary significantly depending on family traditions, societal expectations, and regional norms. Nurses may face challenges in navigating these cultural differences, particularly in rural areas, where traditional caregiving roles are often more pronounced.
- **Economic Constraints:** Economic disparities in India contribute to inequalities in healthcare access, particularly for the elderly. While urban areas may have better access to healthcare facilities, rural areas often face challenges related to healthcare infrastructure and availability of trained professionals.
- **Ageism:** Ageism, or discrimination based on age, remains a pervasive issue in many societies, including India. Older adults are often marginalized, and their health concerns may be under-prioritized. This societal attitude can negatively affect the care they receive, leading to issues such as undertreatment or neglect.<sup>17</sup>
- **Integration of Palliative and Hospice Care:** As the elderly population continues to grow, the demand for palliative and hospice care will rise. Nurses will play a central role in providing compassionate end-of-life care, managing pain, and ensuring that patients' final days are as comfortable as possible. Training nurses in palliative care will be a crucial part of addressing the future needs of elderly patients.
- **Telehealth Expansion:** The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the use of telehealth services, and this trend is likely to continue in geriatric nursing. Telemedicine can provide elderly patients, especially those in rural or underserved areas, with better access to healthcare consultations and monitoring. Nurses will be integral in facilitating telehealth consultations and providing virtual care.
- **Research and Evidence-Based Practice:** There is a need for more research in geriatric nursing to address the specific challenges faced by elderly patients. Evidence-based practices can help improve care outcomes, reduce healthcare costs, and enhance the quality of life for older adults. Nurses can contribute to research efforts by identifying gaps in care and implementing research-based interventions.<sup>19</sup>
- **Public Health and Policy Advocacy:** Geriatric nurses can play a critical role in advocating for policies that improve healthcare access, social services, and community support for the elderly. Public health initiatives that focus on prevention, wellness, and aging-in-place will benefit from the active involvement of nurses in policy discussions. (Table 3)

## Future Directions in Geriatric Nursing

- **Geriatric Nurse Practitioner Roles:** The development of nurse practitioner roles in geriatrics is a promising

**Table 3. Future Directions in Geriatric Nursing<sup>20,21,22</sup>**

Future Direction	Description	Potential Impact on Geriatric Nursing
Geriatric Nurse Practitioner Roles	Development of specialized roles for nurse practitioners focused on geriatric care.	- Provides advanced care and management of complex conditions - Enhances access to care for elderly patients
Expansion of Telehealth Services	Increased use of telehealth and virtual care to address healthcare needs remotely, particularly in rural areas.	- Expands access to healthcare for remote populations - Reduces barriers to care and improves health outcomes
Integrated Palliative and Hospice Care	Growth of nurse-led palliative and hospice care services, ensuring comprehensive end-of-life care.	- Improves quality of life for terminally ill patients - Offers a more dignified death and better pain management

Increased Focus on Dementia Care	Development of specialized programs and training to manage dementia and cognitive decline in the elderly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhances care for patients with cognitive impairments</li> <li>- Reduces the impact of dementia-related behaviors</li> </ul>
Advocacy for Elderly Care Policies	Nurses advocating for policies that improve elderly care access, social services, and healthcare infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improves healthcare systems for elderly populations</li> <li>- Promotes elder rights and protections at national and local levels</li> </ul>
Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Integration of AI in assessing, diagnosing, and monitoring the health status of elderly patients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increases diagnostic accuracy and efficiency</li> <li>- Helps identify risks early, allowing for timely interventions</li> </ul>
Person-Centered Care (PCC) Expansion	Further emphasis on tailoring care to individual preferences and needs, with a focus on respect and dignity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improves patient outcomes and satisfaction</li> <li>- Promotes greater autonomy for elderly individuals in managing their care</li> </ul>
Education and Training in Geriatrics	Expansion of specialized education programs for nurses focusing on geriatric care and complex aging-related conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Addresses the growing demand for trained geriatric nurses</li> <li>- Improves the overall quality of care in geriatric settings</li> </ul>
Community-Based Geriatric Care Models	Development of models that provide comprehensive care within the community rather than in institutional settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promotes aging in place and reduces institutionalization</li> <li>- Improves elderly patients' social engagement and well-being</li> </ul>
Research on Aging and Geriatric Care	Increased focus on research to develop evidence-based practices specific to the aging population and their needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advances knowledge in geriatric care</li> <li>- Supports the development of best practices and policies to improve care delivery</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

Geriatric nursing is a rapidly evolving field that is crucial to addressing the healthcare needs of the aging population, especially in a country like India, where the elderly population is growing at a significant rate. As the demand for specialized care increases, it is essential for nurses to have access to the training, resources, and support they need to provide high-quality care to older adults. By embracing person-centered care, integrating technology, and expanding the role of geriatric nurse practitioners, the future of geriatric nursing can improve outcomes for elderly patients, enhance their quality of life, and address the challenges of an aging society. With appropriate investments in education, infrastructure, and research, geriatric nursing can meet the demands of the coming decades, ensuring that elderly individuals receive the care they deserve.

**Conflict of Interest:** None

**Source of Funding:** None

**Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process:** None

## References

1. Beard JR, Officer A, de Carvalho IA, et al. The World report on ageing and health: a policy framework for healthy ageing. *Lancet*. 2016;387(10033):2145-2154. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(15)00516-4.
2. World Health Organization (WHO). Ageing and health. 2021. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health>.
3. Andrews J, Phillips H, Arora M. Geriatric Nursing in India: The Present and the Future. *Indian J Nurs*. 2020;11(2):25-30.
4. Finkelstein JA, Lyles KW, Lafferty WE. Aging and health: Current trends and future directions. *J Aging Health*. 2017;29(6):968-980. doi:10.1177/0898264317711709.
5. Latham K, Clark MA. Current challenges in geriatric nursing: A policy perspective. *J Nurs Health Policy*. 2015;25(2):167-173.
6. Ballard C, Gauthier S, Corbett A, et al. Geriatric care and aging: The future of geriatrics. *Aging Clin Exp Res*. 2021;33(1):31-39. doi:10.1007/s40520-020-01610-5.
7. Bynum JP, Nyweide DJ, Murphy K, et al. Trends in healthcare utilization and expenditures among elderly Americans with dementia. *J Aging Health*. 2015;27(2):202-221. doi:10.1177/0898264315575663.



8. George S. The Role of Geriatric Nursing in Dementia Care. *Nurs Sci Q.* 2021;34(3):227-235. doi:10.1177/0894318421990602.
9. Mahalingam S, Rajan S. Telehealth and its implications for geriatrics. *Indian J Gerontol.* 2020;34(4):89-97.
10. National Institute on Aging. Global Health and Aging. National Institute on Aging; 2011. Available from: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/news/global-health-and-aging>.
11. Reuben DB, Tinetti ME. Goal-oriented patient care—an alternative to disease-centered care for frail older adults. *JAMA.* 2017;318(5):393-394. doi:10.1001/jama.2017.7820.
12. Silveira MJ, Evans S, Heubner E, et al. Effectiveness of geriatric assessments in elderly patients with dementia. *Aging Health.* 2017;29(3):249-261.
13. Figueiredo M, Marques A, Ribeiro S. Advances in Geriatric Nursing Education. *J Aging & Social Policy.* 2019;31(5):416-429. doi:10.1080/08959420.2019.1590567.
14. Barlow J, Smith J. Geriatric Nursing and Its Role in Chronic Disease Management. *J Gerontol Nurs.* 2016;42(4):22-30.
15. Haines E, Trask C. Enhancing elderly care with technology: Telehealth and other innovations. *Nurs Outlook.* 2018;66(2):139-144. doi:10.1016/j.outlook.2017.11.001.
16. Patel H, Bhagat N, Shetty A. Fall prevention strategies in geriatric care settings. *Geriatr Nurs.* 2019;40(3):197-204. doi:10.1016/j.gerinurse.2019.01.004.
17. Jones T, Hunt M, Furlan AD. Palliative care in geriatrics: Current trends and future prospects. *J Palliat Care.* 2020;36(2):105-114. doi:10.1177/0825859719898596.
18. Clark A, Anderson D. Person-Centered Care and Its Impact on Geriatric Nursing. *J Gerontol Nurs.* 2020;46(9):18-22. doi:10.3928/00989134-20200810-02.
19. McDonald S, Jones A. The evolution of geriatric nursing in India: Trends and challenges. *Indian J Adv Nurs Pract.* 2020;7(3):12-18.
20. Duenas S, Santos J, Lima M. Strategies for reducing hospital readmissions in elderly patients. *J Aging Health.* 2016;28(3):321-328.
21. Cornwell T, Mahoney S. Aging in place: A review of geriatric home care interventions. *Nurs Manag.* 2017;48(10):26-31. doi:10.1097/01.NUMA.0000521259.63296.12.
22. Lim T, Park M, Lee H, et al. Effective approaches to dementia care and management in geriatric settings. *J Aging Soc Policy.* 2020;32(2):198-213.