

# A Voice for Older Adults

## GNLA Triad

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## Purpose

- Examine the role of the nurse in Oregon's assisted living (AL) communities.
- Identify/describe the educational needs/resources for AL nurses.

## Background

Assisted living is a combination of housing, personalized supportive services, and health care designed to respond to the individual needs of older adults who require help with activities of daily living.<sup>1</sup>

	OREGON	NATIONWIDE
Assisted living/residential care facilities	431 <sup>2</sup>	39,500 <sup>3</sup>
Total licensed bed capacity	22,616 <sup>2</sup>	>900,000 <sup>3</sup>
Resident age	>85 <sup>2</sup>	50%>85 <sup>4</sup>

Only one-half of all AL facilities nationwide employ a nurse.<sup>4</sup> Oregon regulations require nursing oversight and intervention however do not mandate time/hours.

Residents in ALs have chronic conditions such as dementia, diabetes, and cardiovascular concerns that require complex clinical management and demand expert nursing oversight, observation, and intervention.<sup>1,4</sup> Other issues include fall risk, medication/behavioral/pain management, and skin concerns.

## Challenges Facing Nurses in the AL Setting

- Complex role
- High turnover
- Isolated practice
- Lack of mentors
- Minimal orientation
- Significant level of autonomy
- Nurses do not see themselves as leaders
- Nursing education curricula does not prepare nurses for this population/setting/work
- Employers lack understanding of the nurse's role
- Variable hours allocated – tied budget not resident acuity
- State regulations targeting nursing outcomes require an increased level of expertise related to:
  - > Medication system oversight
  - > Change of condition assessment
  - > Wound management
  - > Weight monitoring
  - > Coordination with outside services
  - > Delegation of nursing tasks

## Project Outcomes

- Evaluated continuing education and incentive opportunities: five nurses in Oregon (Project Team) are obtaining national certification as Assisted Living Nurse.
- Identified four critical Leader/Manager competency domains for practice:
  - > Care of Older Adults (care/clinical management)
  - > Systems (policies, procedures, quality improvement, regulatory compliance)
  - > People (interpersonal communication/supervision with staff, residents, families, and outside agencies)
  - > Time Management (organization, planning, prioritization)

- Commitment by OHSU RNBS Online Completion Program to enhance/promote Gero focus for clinical practicum experiences.
- Identified >20 new Gero – Assisted Living clinical placement sites for OHSU RNBS students in Population Based Care and Leadership Courses for 2009 – 2010.
- Created discussion forum for AL nurses on the Community Nursing Network website ([www.communitynursingnetwork.org](http://www.communitynursingnetwork.org)).
- Initiated pilot research exploring and describing the Nurse's Role in Assisted Living.
- Planned symposium with statewide stakeholders to be held Spring 2010 on the "Work of the Nurse in Assisted Living."

## Initial Recommendations

- Provide nursing students at all levels (AD, BS, Graduate) with curriculum specific to the care of older adults and the work of the nurse in Assisted Living communities.
- Offer nurses employed in Assisted Living communities opportunities for mentorship, training, and collaboration.
- Conduct pilot research to further explore and describe the role of nurses in ALs.

## Study questions:

- > What passion allows you to do this work?
- > What is the work of the Assisted Living nurse?
- > What prepared you for this work?
- > What do you feel responsible for in your job?
- > What would make your job easier?

## Leadership Project Teams

**INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM**  
Victoria Johnson BA – Owner, Leisure Club Inc.  
Debra Stanley RN – VP Regional Services, Regency Pacific Inc.  
Tim Malone LCSW – Deschutes Mental Health Seniors Program  
Richard MacDonell MD – MyMD Personal Medicine

**NURSE TEAM**  
Deborah Beemer BSN RN – Touchmark at Mt. Bachelor Village  
Debra Nielson RN – Fox Hollow Assisted Living  
Kelli Barnett BSN RN – Partners in Care