

# 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Geriatrics & Gerontological Nursing

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## SHOULD MEDICAL STUDENTS STUDY SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY?

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The General Medical Council guides undergraduate medical education in the United Kingdom (General Medical Council 2009). However, there is some variation between medical schools including, for example, between the social science modules relevant to Social Gerontology. This includes Psychology, Sociology and Social Policy. We believe there is a strong case for the universal inclusion of Social Gerontology in the training of tomorrow's doctors.

There has been a well-known shift to a population with increased numbers of older people and most doctors will have this group amongst their patients who will have heterogeneous living arrangements and social backgrounds. Patients must be viewed holistically given the non-clinical factors influencing health and well-being.

Consideration of psychological factors such as resilience and health seeking behaviours in older age is of paramount importance. Delivering personalised care requires an awareness of the coping strategies increasingly used in later life, for example, by older people who have disabilities or who are widowed. The sociology of later life is warranted by the augmented risk of social exclusion, loneliness and poverty. These sociological issues, amongst others, affect the provision of care. Doctors are becoming increasingly influential at local, regional and national levels of decision-making. This places added importance on understanding social policy at an undergraduate level.

Medical schools should incorporate Social Gerontology into their curricula, to equip medical students with the knowledge and skills to care for our ageing population.

This presentation will draw on the literature and the personal experience of the authors.

### Biography

Anthea Tinker has been Professor of Social Gerontology at King's College London since 1988. She has been on the staff of three Universities and three Government Departments and has been a Consultant to the WHO, EU and OECD. She chaired the College Research Ethics Committee from 2001 – 2011. The sole author of 11 books, co-author of 21 and over 300 articles she has carried out a wide range of research on ageing. She was awarded the CBE in 2000, elected a Founding Member of the Academy of Learned Societies for the Social Sciences in 1999, a Fellow of King's College London in 1998 and was President of the Section of Geriatrics and Gerontology, Royal Society of Medicine 1998-2000. She was awarded the title of Fellow of the British Society of Gerontology in 2008. She was one of the Women of the Year in 2002. In 2010 she was awarded the Alan Walker prize by the British Society of Gerontology for her significant and lasting contribution to Social Gerontology.

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