

3rd International Conference on

AGING & GERONTOLOGY

July 18-19, 2018 | Atlanta, USA

Assessing health literacy and stroke symptomatology in older adults

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Statement of the Problem: Stroke in the Elderly: Stroke is the fifth leading cause of death in the United States and a leading cause of disability with approximately 795,000 strokes occurring in the United States each year, with nearly 75 percent of all strokes occurring in those 65 years and older. Multiple studies suggest that stroke treatment is delayed due to the failure of symptom recognition by the patient, family, or general bystanders with approximately 60% of stroke-related deaths occur outside the hospital setting. Compounding this problem is the fact that many stroke patients are still being transported by private vehicle instead of a 911 activation, further delaying treatment. Additionally, low health literacy continues to be a significant problem for persons over age 65.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: The purpose of our research was to provide support for a multi-disciplinary approach to stroke education and prevention. Through this research project, the study team implemented an experimentally-designed knowledge and opinions pre- and post-test and six weeks follow up assessment. The study participants included three, separate groups in three study phases: 1) staff and team members at a community senior center, 2) older adults (age 65 and older) living at the senior center, and 3) family members or caretakers of older adults. This was an experimental design, feasibility/pilot study using a convenience sample of participants from a Midwest senior living community.

Findings: Findings from this study are pending until data collection is complete in May of 2018. **Conclusion & Significance:** We hypothesize that multilevel education and training in an older adult living community will increase positive behavior attributes for contacting emergency services in the event of a possible stroke.

Biography

Chesser teaches courses in aging over the life span, including AGE 525/825 (Death and Dying), AGE798 (Interprofessional Perspectives on Aging), AGE 517 (Health Communication and Aging) and various graduate courses in aging studies. Her primary research interests are health communication, health literacy, and older adults. She has designed, implemented, and evaluated programs to promote healthier populations through health communication campaigns, and created risk communication training and exercises. She is currently interested in how health communication and media campaigns affect public health issues including the underserved populations. She also serves on the Advisory Board for Health Literacy Kansas.

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