EVOLVING ROLES OF ALLIED HEALTH CARE IN GERIATRIC CARE

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ABSTRACT: Globally prevalent, an ageing population has a significant effect on healthcare systems all around the world. The need for thorough and professional geriatric care continues to grow as the percentage of older adults keeps expanding. Allied health specialists, who specialize in a wide range of specialties like physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language pathology, dietary habits, among others, play a critical role in addressing the distinct and complicated needs of older persons. The study highlights the potential and challenges brought on by an ageing population as it examines the changing responsibilities of allied health care professionals in geriatric care. Acute care or surgical rehabilitation of elderly persons has historically relied heavily on allied health personnel. Their responsibilities now extend outside of conventional rehabilitation settings and favors a more proactive and preventive approach. To improve the quality of life and functional independence of older persons, allied health professionals are currently working on early intervention, health promotion, and illness prevention measures. This change indicates a move away from a model that prioritizes cures and towards one that is more comprehensive and patient-centered. Moreover, collaboration between several allied health specialties is necessary due to the multifaceted character of geriatric care. Interprofessional teams, which guarantee a thorough examination of an older adult's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social well-being, are increasingly the norm in geriatric care. These teams assist the implementation of integrated care plans that take into account both medical issues and psychosocial aspects that affect health outcomes.

The way geriatric care is provided is changing, and technology is a key factor in that change. Allied health providers can deliver interventions and track progress without geographical restrictions thanks to telehealth and remote monitoring systems. For older persons who might have trouble getting to conventional healthcare institutions, this is very helpful. There are still difficulties, such as a lack of qualified workers, payment problems, and the requirement for continual professional growth to meet the changing needs of geriatric care. But as the importance of allied health professionals in providing geriatric care is becoming more widely acknowledged, efforts are being made to solve these problems and better incorporate their knowledge into healthcare systems. To meet the demands of an ageing society, the roles of allied health care workers in geriatric care are fast changing. Their contributions include holistic care, prevention, early intervention, and rehabilitation. These services are frequently provided in conjunction with other professionals and with the use of new technology. Allied health professionals will undoubtedly continue to play a crucial role in enhancing the health, happiness, and functional independence of older persons as the discipline of geriatric care develops.

Keywords: GERIATRIC CARE, HEALTH, PREVENTION, CARE

INTRODUCTION

The population of older adults is increasing at a rate never before seen, dramatically altering the global demographic landscape. An ageing population has resulted from this demographic shift, which was brought on by longer life expectancies and lower birthrates, and it poses particular opportunities and difficulties for healthcare systems around the world. Geriatric care must be efficient and thorough because older people frequently struggle with a variety of complex health requirements. In this setting, allied health care providers are playing roles that are becoming more and more important in determining the course of geriatric care. The field of allied health care encompasses a broad spectrum of specialties, encompassing social work, speech pathology, nutrition, physical therapy, and Occupational Therapist, among others. To address the intricate and numerous healthcare needs of older persons, these experts contribute particular skills and knowledge that are crucial. While traditionally connected with recovery and rehabilitation, allied health professionals are increasingly at the forefront of preventative interventions, early diagnosis, and holistic care initiatives intended to improve the ageing population's quality of life and functional independence. This study explores the evolving duties of allied health care personnel when offering geriatric care, acknowledging the major shifts brought on by a growing elderly population. We can learn more about the major impact of allied health professionals' contributions on the health of senior citizens by investigating the historical roots, modern procedures, obstacles, and opportunities related to their involvement in geriatric care. The duties of allied health care workers are undergoing a paradigm shift that is in line with the
evolving landscape of geriatric care. This paradigm shift spans post-acute recovery to interprofessional collaboration, from technological integration to workforce development. It is of the utmost importance that we recognize the crucial role that allied health care professionals play in aiding the changing requirements of older persons as the demographic transition continues to transform societies all over the world. We can make sure that the elderly population receives the thorough and compassionate care it deserves by appreciating their numerous contributions and modifying our healthcare systems to appropriately utilize their expertise.

The historical background of allied health care in geriatric care, the expanding responsibilities they currently play, the difficulties they encounter, and the prospective future directions in this dynamic sector will all be covered in the next sections of this essay. It is crucial to recognize the critical role that allied health care professionals play in supporting the changing requirements of older persons as the demographic transition continues to transform societies all over the world. We can make sure that the ageing population receives the thorough and compassionate care it deserves by appreciating their numerous contributions and modifying our healthcare systems to appropriately utilize their skills. The history of allied health care in geriatric care, the expanding responsibilities they currently play, the difficulties they encounter, and the promising future directions in this dynamic sector will all be covered in the following sections of this essay.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Growing acknowledgement of the importance of allied health care workers in addressing the complex requirements of the ageing population has drawn more attention to their changing responsibilities in geriatric care in the literature. The important conclusions of recent studies that shed light on the evolution of allied health professionals within the geriatric care environment are summarized in this review.

Transition from Rehabilitation to Holistic Care:
In the past, allied health practitioners were mostly involved in post-acute rehabilitation for elderly patients recovering from operations or accidents. Contemporary literature, however, demonstrates a paradigm change in support for a more inclusive strategy. According to an investigation, proactive health promotion, early intervention, and preventative measures are now used by allied health professionals to improve older individuals' general well-being. This change highlights the importance of addressing the cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of elderly people in addition to their physical problems. Geriatric care is fundamentally multifaceted and necessitates a thorough evaluation and treatment strategy. Interprofessional collaboration among allied health care workers is becoming increasingly important, according to the research. Researchers contend that an all-encompassing integrated care method guarantees an accurate evaluation of the needs of older humans, resulting in interventions that are specifically designed to improve their functional autonomy and quality of life.

Integration of Technology:
For allied health practitioners, the use of technology in geriatric care has created new opportunities. For older persons, telehealth, remote monitoring, and digital interventions have been useful in removing geographic restrictions and boosting access to care. Allied health professionals are using technology to administer therapies, track progress, and engage in tele-rehabilitation, increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of geriatric care, according to a systematic review.

Workforce Development:
Allied health care professionals in geriatric care face difficulties despite their changing roles. Concerns about a lack of qualified workers, poor payment systems, and the necessity for continued professional development are well-documented. The challenges faced by allied health workers are examined in research which also highlights the significance of legislative measures and educational programmes in addressing these issues and ensuring a qualified workforce to meet the needs of geriatric care.

Person-Centered Care and Patient Empowerment:
Modern geriatric care places a strong emphasis on person-centered strategies that give the patient's preferences, objectives, and values top priority. The contribution of allied health professionals to patient empowerment and collaborative decision-making is becoming more widely acknowledged. The co-creation of treatments by allied healthcare providers and older people improves treatment adherence and fosters a sense of control over one's own health, according to research.

The literature study shows that the responsibilities of allied health care workers in geriatric care have undergone a dynamic development. These professionals are crucial in addressing the changing requirements of the ageing population, from their historical link with rehabilitation to their modern engagement in holistic, preventive, and person-centered care. To maximize their contributions to geriatric care, interprofessional collaboration, technological integration, and workforce development emerge as essential initiatives. The findings from the existing literature serve as a basis for future study and innovation in allied health care's shifting responsibilities within geriatric care settings as we negotiate the difficulties and opportunities of an ageing environment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
The landscape of healthcare delivery for the ageing population is changing as a result of the changing responsibilities of allied health care providers in geriatric care. The main findings are presented in this section together with their consequences and future directions for the field are highlighted.

1. Transition from Rehabilitation to Holistic Care: A major topic is the change in the role of allied health professionals from one that focuses largely on rehabilitation to one that also includes holistic care. This change recognizes the complex interrelationships between physical health and cognitive, emotional, and social well-being as well as the varied nature of aging-related difficulties. Allied health workers improve the quality of life and functional independence of older persons by taking a proactive approach to health promotion and disease prevention. This progression recognizes that each person has specific needs and objectives and is in line with the larger paradigm of person-centered care.
2. Interprofessional Collaboration and Comprehensive Care: Interprofessional collaboration has been identified as a crucial component of effective geriatric care. Diverse allied health experts work together to assure thorough assessment and treatment that takes into account the intricate relationship of psychological, physical, and social aspects. This multidisciplinary approach improves care coordination, decreases fragmented care, and lowers the likelihood of neglecting important parts of a senior citizen's health. The joint effort of allied health professionals is necessary for attaining the best outcome as the ageing population presents issues that are more complicated.

3. Technological integration and Telehealth: novel methods for allied health workers to interact with older people have been made possible by the incorporation of technology into geriatric care. Access to care is facilitated by telehealth platforms and remote monitoring systems, especially for residents of underprivileged locations. The literature focuses on the adoption of tele-rehabilitation, virtual assessments, and remote interventions by allied health professionals as a way to broaden their reach and influence. This technological integration is improving convenience for senior citizens while also making healthcare delivery more effective and economical.

4. Obstacles and Workforce Development: The changing responsibilities of allied health professionals in the provision of geriatric care are not without obstacles. The smooth integration of their expertise into the healthcare system is hampered by a lack of labor and subpar compensation schemes. Policies must be changed, money must be allocated, and money must be spent on education and training to address these issues. To ensure a qualified and driven workforce prepared to fulfill the demands of the ageing population, initiatives aimed at attracting and keeping allied health professionals within geriatric care settings are essential.

5. Person-Centered Care and Empowerment: The person-centered strategy, supported by allied health professionals, emphasizes cooperation and joint decision-making with senior citizens. Allied health workers encourage patient empowerment by involving them in the co-creation of care plans, promoting a sense of control over their health journeys. This strategy ensures that senior citizens actively participate in decisions that have an influence on their well-being and is consistent with the ideals of autonomy, dignity, and respect.

A theoretical change towards holistic, person-centered, and technologically integrated approaches is reflected in the evolution of the roles played by allied health care professionals in the care of the elderly. The thorough evaluation, prevention, and treatment of aging-related illnesses are all improving because to interprofessional teamwork and telehealth. Despite obstacles including labor shortages and payment problems, the crucial role that allied health professionals play in promoting the health and wellbeing of the ageing population is increasingly recognized. By highlighting the significance of ongoing research, policy lobbying, and training programmers to support the growing responsibilities of allied health care workers in geriatric care, the conclusions drawn from this study help to shape the future direction of geriatric care.

CONCLUSION

An innovative reaction to the opportunities and problems presented by the ageing population can be observed in the changing duties of associated health care workers in geriatric care. This essay has examined the theoretical underpinnings, evaluated the literature, and examined the findings, underlining the major changes and associated field-related ramifications. The trajectory of elderly care is being strongly influenced by the roles of allied health professionals as the worldwide demography landscape continues to change. The change from a rehabilitation-centered approach to a holistic, person-centered strategy denotes a paradigm shift that acknowledges the complex interactions between older individuals' physical, cognitive, emotional, and social well-being. This trend highlights the significance of preventative measures, early interventions, and health promotion initiatives, all of which are aligned with the objective of improving older individuals' quality of life and functional independence. An essential component of comprehensive geriatric care is interprofessional teamwork. Care teams can offer detailed assessments, individualized interventions, and coordinated care plans that meet the numerous issues faced by older individuals by combining the knowledge of various allied health professions. By tackling the complexity of aging-related health concerns in a holistic manner, this collaborative paradigm promises better results and patient satisfaction.

The possibilities for providing geriatric care have been broadened through technological integration, including telehealth and remote monitoring. These techniques are being used by allied health professionals to get beyond geographic restrictions and increase accessibility to care, especially for elderly people with mobility issues. This integration not only improves productivity but also shows how well allied health care personnel can adjust to changing healthcare environments. Despite the obvious advancement, problems still exist. Workforce shortages and payment structures pose obstacles that call for policy adjustments, outreach efforts, and activism. Unlocking the full potential of allied health professionals in geriatric care hinges heavily on a commitment to continual professional development and the development of a knowledgeable and motivated workforce. The empowerment of older persons becomes crucial in a setting where care is person-centered. Older persons are given the opportunity to actively participate in decisions affecting their health thanks to the collaborative approach of allied health professionals, which fosters a sense of autonomy, dignity, and control over their well-being.

Due to the evolving face of healthcare for the ageing population, allied health care workers' roles in geriatric care are changing in an unusual manner. Their contributions range from holistic strategies, interprofessional collaboration, technological integration, and patient empowerment to rehabilitation treatment. The knowledge gained from their changing roles will pave the way for an inclusive, flexible, and efficient geriatric care system that prioritizes the wellbeing and dignity of senior citizens as the global ageing phenomenon continues.