

Op Ed Gerontology

Three years ago, as a junior in high school, I was lost in the vocational pathways of my future. With the passing of my elderly neighbor, who was so graciously taken care of by the Hospice House in my town, I realized the difference the organization made to my neighbor and her family. I then decided to serve my community through Hospice as a volunteer. My experience at the Hospice House changed my life forever. I finally understood my calling in medicine as a nurse, and not just a nurse, but a nurse for the aging.

As a volunteer I would listen to the patients life stories, read them books, play games, or just simply provide the comfort of having someone beside them. Patients of Hospice are living with life-limiting illnesses and usually only have weeks left to live. Hospice's mission is to provide compassionate care with the highest human dignity. I cherished the moments I spent with the patients and sorrowed in their deaths. The nurses, social workers, doctors, and therapists are an incredibly dedicated staff that respect and value the beauty of aging in medicine.

Through my involvement at Hospice and my current studies in nursing I appreciate the significance of gerontology. It is important to not only enhance the lives of the aging that are fatally ill, like Hospice aims to accomplish, but also promote the wellness of all the aging. It is important to respect everyone in the entire community and, often times, the aging population are forgotten.

I urge others to consider gerontology as an area of specialization. The life of an aging individual is as beautiful as any other life and continues to uncover medical phenomenon's every day. Aging should be distinguished among the living as an important key to society. Everyone ages, so to study and serve those who are aging would benefit society. Trends and patterns revealed in the past serve as baselines to the future, and we are the future. Through the study and service to the aging we can discover critical evidence and use it to promote the continuous support of older adults.

We can begin to promote the lives of the aging, many of whom are our parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles by contemplating a specialization or study in gerontology. Their lives, as well as our children's, and ours will be affected by the efforts to increase gerontology over the medical field. As a medical professional we vow to enhance the lives of everyone, why then is gerontology specialization a minority in medicine? The aging population can contribute significantly to medical research and the future of care for the aging.