

# Preface

Five of the six leading causes of death among older Americans in 2004 were chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, cerebrovascular disease (stroke), chronic pulmonary disease, and diabetes mellitus. All of these diseases negatively affect quality of life, contributing to reduced functioning and the increased eventuality of having to move to a nursing home or retirement community. The increased birth rate after World War II and the significant increase in life expectancy since the early twentieth century have resulted in an increased prevalence of disabling and costly chronic diseases.

There are many questions still to be addressed in the fields of aging and chronic disease. What are the risk factors associated with the increased prevalence of chronic diseases in older populations? What are the major complications that contribute to disability and increased health care utilization and costs? What impact do chronic diseases have on disability and quality of life? What are the most effective treatments and rehabilitation programs? What steps can be taken to avoid overuse and/or misuse of drugs? How can patient education and self-management activities be improved to help these patients and their caregivers better understand and cope with their conditions? How can caregiver burden be reduced?

This book addresses these questions by focusing on how major chronic disorders, such as diabetes, arthritis, cardiovascular disease, and cancer, affect health care utilization, costs, coping, disability, and quality of life in aging populations. Research studies are used to illustrate a wide range of topics from the epidemiology of chronic diseases in older populations, health care utilization and costs, to quality of life concerns, treatment outcomes, and caregiver burden. Case studies from a clinical psychologist's private practice are used to clarify some psychosocial issues underlying chronic diseases and health care.

Chapter 1 analyzes the epidemiology of eight chronic diseases in older adults. Data on the prevalence of diseases and associated risk factors are stressed in this chapter. Health care planners can use these analyses to improve primary and secondary health care prevention activities through more effective uses of health care resources.

Chapter 2 examines the latest information on health care utilization and costs for older adults that can point to a more efficient means of reducing the rising health care costs associated with the treatment of chronic diseases.

In Chaps. 3-5, Dr. Mark L. Goldstein, a clinical psychologist, reviews the literature and uses composite case studies from his practice to illustrate quality of life issues, psychosocial problems, and cognitive difficulties in older adults.

In the remaining chapters, each of the eight chronic diseases is evaluated in terms of five major issues. First, the latest trends in complications associated with each chronic condition are explored. Second, the impact of each disease on disability and quality of life is analyzed. Third, the processes of stress, coping, and social support are described. Fourth, the latest information on treatment and rehabilitation outcomes is discussed. Last, new trends in patient education and self-management are presented.

The information in this book will be relevant to a wide range of professionals and students in the fields of gerontology, medicine, nursing, public health, mental health, social work, education, health administration, health policy, and social sciences.

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