

GERONTOLOGY

by Angela deFreitas

The global population is aging. The “baby boomers” are coming of age, retiring from their jobs and..... living longer, and increasingly, still productive lives.

The social and support needs of elderly persons are very specific and the career of gerontology is the area of elder care involving many aspects of improving the life status of these persons, but from a social or sociological point of view. Gerontology is not to be confused with geriatrics which deals with the medical side of aging.



WHAT THE WORK INVOLVES

At some time during the work day gerontologists might:

- Interview clients to determine what type of aid, support or community life they require
- Liaise with clients, community and social workers to develop and implement assistance and support plans for the elderly
- Help clients find assistance with daily activities such as eating and bathing
- Research, plan and inform on services for the elderly through programmes and agencies that are available to their clients
- Coordinate services provided to clients

- Transport clients—for example to appointments or to benefit from services in their community
- Check in with clients to ensure that services are being provided
- Help in developing group activities for the elderly community at care facilities
- Conduct life skills classes
- Advocate on behalf of their clients with government agencies

Most gerontologists will find work in hospitals, nursing homes, senior citizen centres and with community service projects. Work would normally be 9-5 but overtime and weekends may sometimes be required

WHO IS THIS CAREER FOR?

This career is for a helping, caring person who likes to help other people by giving advice, informing, teaching and guiding. Patience is a must and excellent communication skills for dealing with people and also for negotiating.

WHAT CAN I EARN?

You can earn a medium range salary. This is dependent on the organisation or agency you are employed to and the level of your qualifications.

HOW DO I QUALIFY?

Majors such as sociology, social work, public/community health care and mental health, nursing and psychology will start to equip you for this career.

To advance to higher management positions, gerontologists must have a master's degree. Studies in gerontology include aspects of medicine, biology, psychology and sociology and other sciences. Courses in these programs focus on the physical, psychological and social changes that happen as people age

Some universities offer gerontology modules or concentrations within social work, psychology or public health degree programmes. Certificates in gerontology and aging are becoming more available.

WHO OFFERS TRAINING IN JAMAICA?

The University of Technology (UTECH)

The University of the West Indies (UWI) offers a post graduate diploma in gerontology.

Check also nursing programmes at various institutions as gerontology may be included.

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