



Where would you like to see gerontological nursing education to be at in 5 years?

I would like to see a stand-alone geriatrics course included in all undergraduate nursing programs. It is hard for me to believe that many nursing programs still do not offer such a course, given that this is the primary patient population for the vast majority of new graduates.

Favorite experience as a gerontological nurse expert educator?

I would say that taking students into the clinical setting and working with older adults has been my most rewarding experience, currently I teach the Gerontological Nursing Course and I have the opportunity to infuse enthusiasm for caring for this population into my students in the hopes that they will choose gerontological nursing as their career path.

Key words of wisdom for those nurses interested in becoming a distinguished educator in gerontological nursing education?

It can be easy to lose sight of your personal mission and goals in the day to day work of a professor and researcher. I have found that having a really solid answer to the question, "Why am I doing this anyway?" – has helped me continue to find meaning in my work over the years.

Who is a key person who supported you in becoming a gerontological nurse educator?

When I was working as a charge nurse in a San Francisco nursing home, I was approached by Jeanie Kayser-Jones who interviewed me as part of her NIH funded research. Following our interview, she gave me her card, and we talked a little bit about UCSF and the doctoral program there. She was absolutely instrumental in helping me develop as a research scientist both at UCSF and beyond.

What motivated you to become a gerontological nurse educator?

Following graduation from University of Pennsylvania in 1996, I began my nursing career working as a charge



Alison Kris
PhD, RN
Fairfield University

nurse in a San Francisco long-term care facility. Having just graduated from nursing school and having little clinical experience, I was put in charge of a large unit where I was the only professional nurse to provide care to 45 very ill older people, while also being responsible for the supervision of five nurse aides. The patients on this unit had complex nursing care needs. Many were cognitively impaired – they were in pain and were short of breath. Some were fearful and lonely. However, the insufficient level of staffing forced me to generally confine my duties to dispensing medications and dressing pressure ulcers. There was rarely time to satisfactorily assess or treat the patient's symptoms, and consequently, many people may have suffered needlessly. Care of older adults remains a focus of my scholarship. As a geriatric nurse, I remain particularly concerned about the quality of care delivered in nursing homes. My program of research systematically addresses the many challenges faced by older adults living in nursing homes, and focuses on addressing the unmet needs of this vulnerable older adult population. At its core, my work is one of a scientist-practitioner focused on contributing in a meaningful way to the mental and physical health of older adults.

About Alison

Dr. Alison E. Kris is an Associate Professor of Nursing at Fairfield University. She received her BSN in nursing from the University of Pennsylvania in 1996, and a Ph.D. from the University of California at San Francisco in 2002. She completed a John A. Hartford Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship at UCSF in 2004, focused on the quality of care delivered in nursing homes. Currently, she is working on projects which seek to improve the quality of care and quality of life for residents living in nursing homes experiencing memory loss. Specifically, she has examined both the care environment as well as the impact of reminiscence and music therapy interventions for these residents. In addition, she has also served as the course coordinator for Geriatric Nursing, a core nursing course for all sophomore and junior level undergraduate students.