



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

I would like to see gerontological nursing a more prominent area of focus in nursing education throughout the country. I would also like to see more gerontological nursing experts involved in nursing education and research to raise our profile and to in turn, get the attention of nursing students and new nurses.

Favorite experience as a gerontological nurse expert educator?

This fall my university announced increased interest in the number of undergraduate nursing students participating in gerontological nursing research as a result of taking my Nursing Research class – I was thrilled for this double whammy – an interest among students in research and gerontology.

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

I have had several incredible mentors regarding gerontological research which then naturally led to me becoming a gerontological nurse educator. These mentors include Kathy Bowles, Mary Naylor, Neville Strumpf, and Pam Cacchione as well being exposed to the National Hartford Center for Gerontological Nursing Excellence's Leadership Conference for several years.

What motivated you to become a gerontological nurse educator?

I've dedicated the majority of my nursing career to caring for older adults and have found that older adults are often overlooked as a career option among students and new nurses.

It's important to expose nursing students and new nurses to caring for older adults to help them consider this area of nursing. To this end, the majority of my research, mentorship and teaching has been directed toward this goal.



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

Keep advocating and working toward improving the lives of older adults – students will be naturally drawn to your enthusiasm for this population. Your pursuit of excellence has the potential to have a tremendous impact on the students you teach and will open new opportunities both for you and your students that will ultimately impact the care and lives of older adults in a positive way.

About Melissa

Melissa O'Connor, PhD, MBA, RN is an Associate Professor of Nursing at Villanova University's M. Louise Fitzpatrick College of Nursing. Dr. O'Connor is a pioneer researcher and national expert in home health care and gerontology nursing. She studies home-based health care for older adults, filling a critical gap in knowledge for health care providers. Dr. O'Connor is committed to conducting rigorous research on determining readiness for discharge from home health and developing a decision-support tool, which is vital for avoiding problematic and costly adverse events plaguing chronically ill older adults living at home. Her big data analyses indicate best practices to prevent rehospitalization in Medicare-reimbursed home health care recipients. Along the way, Dr. O'Connor includes undergraduate nursing students in the process, introducing students to the scientific rigors and the demanding intellectual challenges of research as an essential component of good nursing practice. Since joining the faculty at Villanova, Dr. O'Connor has led the implementation of the groundbreaking transitional care experience for junior nursing students. She is also Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Visiting Nurse Association of Greater Philadelphia.