

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

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Dr. May Wykle, noted Gerontological nurse recently said: "Geriatric Nursing, the last frontier is here to stay." Gerontological Nursing has been taught as a free-standing course at Radford University for over 20 years. The course has been adapted to address changes in healthcare, community resources, and shifting demographics related to aging populations. With a focus on enhancing quality of life, improving or maintaining function, and recognition of geriatric specific issues, the course has elevated learning, clinical reasoning, and practice. Keeping abreast of not only the current evidence but also the current learning strategies of students, we focus on the aging process, biological, sociological, psychological, and spiritual components and adapt our clinical courses to these same principles. Individuality, quality of life and maintaining independence are our primary goals.



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Students begin each semester by participating in Skills Day which utilizes GERT® (GEROnTologic Simulator) and other aging simulation tools. Stations for nutrition, sensory, mobility, and motivational interviewing prepare students to enter clinical rotations. A clearer understanding of aging challenges involves experiencing those challenges. For example, hemiplegia is simulated through a knee brace, sling, cane, eye patch, and a lollipop held on the affected side. Students are tasked with making a bed, putting on clothes, going to the bathroom, and trying to cook without the use of both arms and legs.

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Students complete 84 clinical hours in skilled/long term care, assisted living/memory care, long term acute care, and adult day centers. Every semester students, in collaboration with faculty, plan and implement a community service project which benefits an older adult population. Some examples of past projects include construction of a sensory board for a memory care unit, building a handicap accessible picnic table for an adult care center, and hosting numerous events at facilities such as a Senior prom, holiday parties, rotating activity stations at a senior living community, and creating an accessible garden for long term care residents.

Clinical simulation experiences utilize two Standardized Patients scenarios in a community setting. One scenario is home visit by hospice nurses (students) to a recently widowed older adult male. Students evaluate his physical and emotional health and implement interventions. The other scenario is a home health nurse (students) visit with an interprofessional component with Physical Therapy (PT) and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) students. The patient is an older female with limited education who has recently been discharged from acute care. An assessment of her status is conducted by the 'home health' nurse followed by a PT evaluation. Following debriefing, PT and Nursing return for a follow-up visit to discover the patient experiencing an acute delirium. Students must work together to evaluate the situation and intervene. EMS is called to transport the patient to the 'Emergency Department'. Recognition of delirium, hand-off

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reports, SBAR, and better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of other professionals teaches students the importance of interprofessional collaborations in patient care.

Summative evaluation of the course is an extension of the Critical Care Case Analysis where students must use evidence based resources to address the outcomes of a high acuity hospitalization on an adult. If the patient is young, students must theorize what impact the hospitalization will have as the patient ages. If the patient is older, descriptions of normal aging changes and chronic illness trajectories demonstrate the students' understanding of healing, function, and quality of life. Interprofessional referrals, family resources and needs, evidence based practice, and use of appropriate measurement instruments are included.