



SPECIAL POPULATION FOCUS: GERIATRIC FLASH GUIDE

As part of the National Outreach Initiative (NOI), ASDA seeks to highlight special populations that may have unique care needs. This Chapter Flash Guide is meant to serve as an aid to ASDA members and leaders by providing background on ways to reach out to this special population: geriatrics.

According to the National Institutes of Health, the “elderly” population is defined as those 65 years of age and older. However, while the aging process is commonly measured by chronological age, this process is not uniform and simply using chronological age fails to address the heterogeneity observed among this population. These differences have forced providers to necessitate individualization of treatment regimens, based on pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic factors that patients present with.¹

In dentistry, elderly adults can be defined on a functional basis. According to an article from the Journal of the American Dental Association, the aging population may be placed into one of three broad categories: functionally independent older adults, frail older adults and functionally dependent older adults.² Just as with medical concerns, elderly patients present with many unique dental needs as well.

It is the hope of the Council on Professional Issues, through the NOI, that chapters will create events to reach out to this population and help address dental and social needs. (Look for an example of such an event on page 2.) In dentistry these patients can present with polypharmacy, complex medical histories, and the need for modification of traditional treatment, among other presentations.

There are many resources available for chapters in implementing community outreach. Refer to ASDA’s chapter how-to guide: [Community Service](#) for additional aid in getting your event off the ground. Please also [reach out to Colgate](#), the official partner of the NOI, who is graciously offering oral hygiene kits to participating chapters.

Contact the Council on Professional Issues at professionalissues@ASDAnet.org with questions.

¹ Singh, S. (2014). Defining ‘elderly’ in clinical practice guidelines for pharmacotherapy. *Pharm Prac (Granada)*, 12(4): 489.

² Ettinger, R. L., BDS, MDS, DDSc, DABSCD. (2007). Oral Health and the Aging Population. *J Amer Dent Assoc*, 138(S1): S5-S6.

ASDA chapters are encouraged to create events to engage this special population and help address its dental and social needs. Here's one example of a successful event that brought dental students and the elderly together.

Name of project: Saturday Morning Nails

ASDA chapter: Buffalo

Description (where, when, and details of project): Twice a month, ASDA Buffalo's outreach division, BOCA (Buffalo Outreach and Community Assistance, also "mouth" in Spanish), sends volunteers to a local nursing home to help paint nails for their residents. Often times, residents are unable to paint their own nails, or are unable to get them professionally done, and so our students get to practice their hand skills by assisting them in this way.

Target audience (children, underserved population, dental students, etc.): Residents at nearby nursing homes.

Planning time: 2 months to get initial plans in motion

Volunteers required: 4 volunteers to attend, 2 students to coordinate time, location, schedule

Other participating groups (if applicable): None

Budget (including cost of the event and any funds raised by event, if applicable): This event does not spend or raise any funds.

Contact person and email: ASDA/BOCA Outreach Coordinators, asdabocaoutreach@gmail.com