## ATTITUDES OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS TOWARD OLDER ADULTS

#### THE PROBLEM

- >Previous research has indicated that health care professional students have negative attitudes toward older adults (Eynard & Douglas, 2012; Ryan & McCauley, 2005; Söderhamn et al., 2001)
- >With the aging of the baby boomer generation, health care professionals cannot avoid caring for older adults
- >If caregivers have negative attitudes toward older adults, they may not provide optimal care (Jacelon, 2002)

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- 1. What are the attitudes of health care professional students toward adults 65 years of age and older?
- 2. What personal characteristics (age, gender, educational level, race) of health care professional students are related to their attitudes towards older adults?
- 3. What is the relationship between health care professional students' personal experiences with older adults, clinical experiences with older adults, and knowledge about older adults and their attitudes towards older adults?



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## **INSTRUMENT**

Carolina Opinion on Care of Older Adults (COCOA)

- >Developed at the University of North Carolina Medical School to measure medical students' attitudes toward older adults
- >Cronbach's reliability coefficient for original study-0.801
- >Cronbach's reliability coefficient for current study-0.842

## **PERTINENT FINDINGS**

- >Unlike some previous studies, students in this study have very positive attitudes toward older adults
- >Strongest correlation to students' attitudes toward older adults was the number of close personal relationships they had with older adults
- >In agreement with previous studies, there was a significant but weak correlation between students' attitudes and their knowledge of older adults
- >A significant but weak correlation was found between students' attitudes and their age and educational level, which also replicated previous results

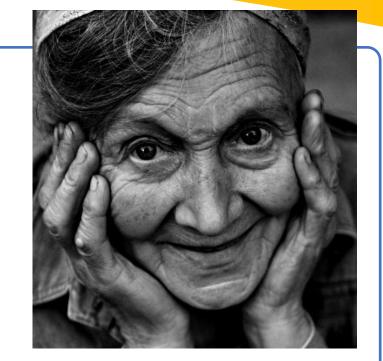
## **IMPLICATIONS**

- >Findings from this study underscore the need for gerontology education for all health care professional students
- >More continuing education programs regarding care of older adults should be offered for health professionals already in the field, since there is a correlation between knowledge and positive attitudes
- >Programs to reform health care delivery models for older adult health care must be given priority in Congress

## **DESIGN**

>descriptive

>exploratory



## **SETTING**

A large, Catholic university in an urban setting in northeast Pennsylvania

## **SAMPLE**

A convenience sample of 119 health care professional students from:

- >occupational therapy
- >nursing
- >physical therapy
- >exercise science
- >community health education
- >rehabilitation counseling

## The sample was:

- 93% <25 years old
- 89.3% female
- 90.8% Caucasian

