Title: SPECIAL SESSION: Caregiving in an Aging World: Quality of Care and Quality of Life
Type: Oral

Keywords: Aging, Direct care workers and Quality of work life

Description/Overview:
New models of long-term care have been designed to improve quality of care and quality of life for older adults. These improvements can only be achieved by nurses collaborating effectively with direct care workers and leading efforts to improve support and resources for caregivers.

Abstract Text:
Across the world, in both developed and developing countries, life expectancy has increased dramatically, adding substantially to the number of older adults. At the same time, fertility rates have dropped. The overall result is a significant demographic shift and a changing disability ratio (the ratio of working age adults to adults 65 and over). This demographic shift has created challenges for families, organizations providing care, communities and nations in finding the resources needed to care for an aging population.

While disability rates at each age have stabilized, and in some places actually declined, the shifting demographics have created a greater need for caregivers at a time when there are both fewer available caregivers. Considerable evidence suggests that many caregivers are insufficiently prepared and supported for their caregiving responsibilities. Nurses are in a pivotal position to guide, support, nurture and educate the direct care workers who provide most of the hands on care. Unlike hospitals and other care delivery settings, nurses in long term care settings work largely ‘through’ the unlicensed direct care providers they supervise, making it necessary for nurses and direct care workers to collaborate effectively. Unfortunately, these two groups often work largely in isolation from each other. While being part of the same organization and working in proximity with each other, they often go about their work quite separately.

New models of long-term care have been designed to improve quality of care and quality of life for older adults needing care, recognizing the central role of direct care workers and the need for closer collaboration between nurses and direct care workers. These models have also increased attention to the experience of direct care workers, hoping to improve the quality of care while decreasing the high turnover rates characteristic of long-term care settings by increasing the quality of work life.

Public policies have only begun to acknowledge the contributions and needs of caregivers, although none of these sufficiently address their needs. Policies aimed at long term care settings, in particular have begun to acknowledge the importance of residents’ general quality of life, expanding beyond the quality of technical care which current regulations are based on.

As the largest population of professionals in long term care settings, nurses are in the best position to advocate for the needed resources to support older adults and their caregivers.

References:


**Content Outline:**

**Introduction:**

Demographics are changing across the world

- Fertility rates are in decline
- Longevity is increasing
- Paid and family caregivers are declining in numbers

Front line/direct caregivers of older adults provide over 80% of care in formal settings

- Paid caregivers are insufficiently trained
- Paid caregivers are insufficiently supported
- Nurses oversee direct care providers of older adults

**Experience of caregivers**

Intersection of care quality and quality of life

- New care models focus on person centered care
- New care models focus on quality of life
New care models are designed to improve quality of work life

Conclusion:

Need for organizational and public policies to support caregivers across settings
Need for nurses to take the lead in oversight, guidance and education of caregivers

Organizer

Barbara Bowers, PhD, RN, FAAN
University of Wisconsin-Madison
School of Nursing
Professor
H6/250 CSC, 600 highland Avenue
Madison WI 53792
USA

**Professional Experience:** Dr. Barbara Bowers is an internationally recognized expert in qualitative and mixed-methods research. Her work focuses on organizational models and work practices in long term care settings. She is currently Director of Education for Community Academic Partnership program, a core component of the UW Madison Institute for Clinical and Translational Research (CTSA). Dr. Bowers has taught qualitative and mixed-methods courses for over 25 years, co-authored a book on second generation grounded theory and contributed several invited book chapters on use of qualitative and mixed-methods research.

**Author Summary:** Dr. Barbara Bowers is an internationally recognized expert in qualitative and mixed-methods research. Her research focuses on organizational models and work practices in long term care settings.