

Only 1% of registered
nurses are certified
in geriatrics.

Taking the lead on elder care.

Understand the growing necessity
and future of gerontology.

DAN BELLER, VICE PRESIDENT, FUSION MEDICAL STAFFING

The baby boomer effect.

Just like they've done since the beginning, the baby boomer generation continues to shake up the economy. And as that population is aging past 65-70 years old, the health care industry is next in their path. The sheer numbers and longevity of boomers will soon demand more attention from the health care system than it is currently set up to handle. We just don't have nearly enough certified, trained nurses to meet that demand.

Compounding this issue is the fact that so many of the nurses of that same generation are retiring in record numbers. Seventy-three percent of baby boomer nurses say they are planning on retiring in three years or less.¹ Not only is the system losing a large number of nurses in a short span, but they are going to be losing their experience and expertise, which are both crucial to positive patient outcomes.

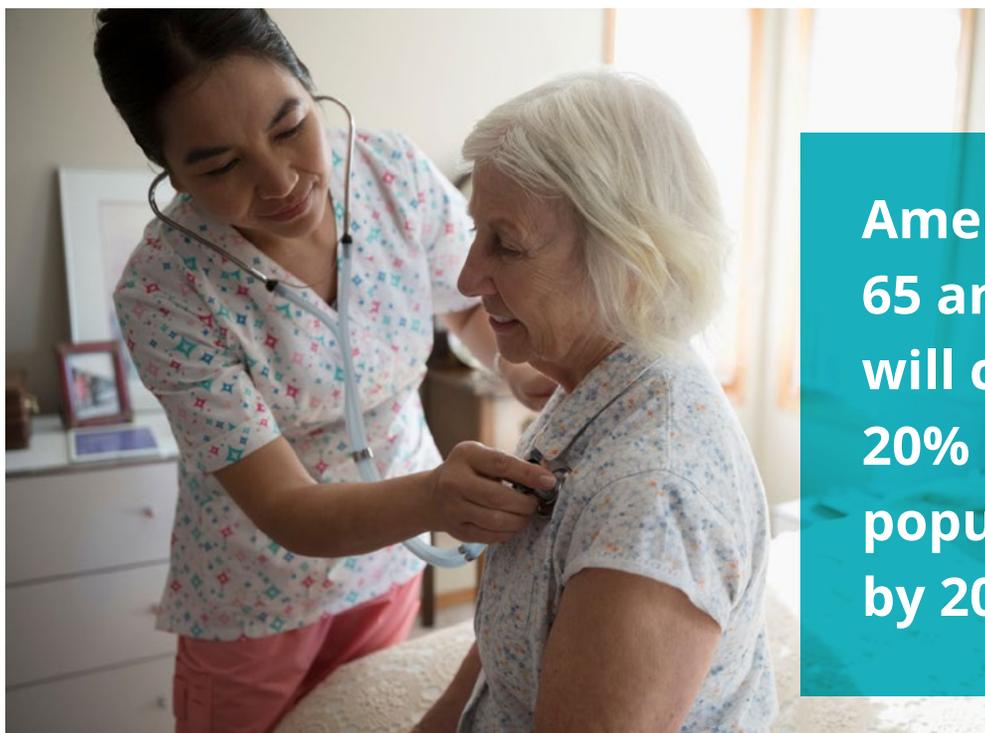
That's why it's so critical to begin preparing your healthcare team to shift their collective mindset and embrace the importance of elder care.

Stay ahead of the elder care curve.

Americans 65 and older will comprise 20 percent of the population by 2030, jumping from 35 million in 2000 to an estimated 70 million.² And with people, on average, living well into their 80s, the pressure as a society and as an industry to care for the elderly becomes pronounced.

Over the years, the nursing profession has seen its share of shortages. But the baby boomer effect makes our current crisis more desperate than before. Experts estimate a million registered nurse job openings will be available by 2024, which is double the rate experienced in previous nursing shortages.³

Starting to emphasize elder care in your organization now can pay large dividends in the future. Strive to provide next-level geriatric care experience now so that you not only become the go-to hospital for elderly patient care but a magnet for the compassionate, talented nurses entering the field.



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Changing perception.

Nursing students do not often select gerontological nursing as their first career choice. Instead, they choose pediatric, neonatal or obstetric fields. For too long, gerontological nursing has been seen as less interesting and more work.

Obviously, it's going to become increasingly important that nursing students are better educated on gerontology and we emphasize the need for jobs in the field as a positive. We don't need to just fill open positions; we need to build an army of elder advocates.

One way to change perception for students is to expose them to this field early on through mentorships or clinical clerkships. A 2010 national survey of U.S. geriatric

medicine program directors said that only 27 percent require a geriatric clerkship.⁴ Increasing this number could be crucial to shaping their perception and appreciation for elder care.

These aging baby boomers shouldn't be seen as a burden but as an opportunity. Between Europe, Canada, Australia and Asia, [we've long trailed behind much of the world](#) in our care for the elderly, and now is the time to commit ourselves to changing that.

Technology can make a difference.

Thanks to advances in technology and medicine, we are living [30 years longer](#) on average than our ancestors were 100 years ago. And it's going to take a further commitment to technology to be able to cope with that kind of longevity.

And when it comes to the senior patients themselves, they are far and away the most tech-savvy group of senior citizens we've ever encountered. Sixty-seven percent of adults 65 and older are accessing the internet on their phones every day.⁵ And nearly one-fifth of Americans 65 and older are already using wearable devices.⁶

By incorporating wearables into the industry, we can monitor sleep patterns, body temperature and heart rate data that can be sent directly to their doctors and nurses.

It's time to take action.

There is a general lack of training and certification of those treating older patients. Currently, only 1 percent of registered nurses are certified in geriatrics.⁷ This issue may be the No. 1 problem we face in delivering needed care for older persons. There are about 7,400 certified geriatricians in the U.S.—one geriatrician for every 2,550 Americans age 75 and older.⁸

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It's essential that we attract and empower nurses to own the future of elder care. Here are a few ideas to help your organization's team start to make the change. ►

In addition, many healthcare systems are making telemedicine a more integrated part of their practices. Using online video consultations through PC or mobile devices has proven effective for timely consult services, the management of chronic illness, post-discharge maintenance and the reduction of hospital readmissions.

Using this kind of cutting-edge technology can be attractive for tech-savvy millennial nurses entering the field and aid them in a challenging new field by helping reduce their learning curve and providing a more holistic and rewarding patient experience as well.

► **Want to learn more about the internet of medical things? [Download our free infographic.](#)**

7 ways to build a team of elder advocates.

1. Provide early mentorship for nursing students.
 2. Cover costs of geriatric certification training.
 3. Compensate gerontology staff fairly.
 4. Provide loan forgiveness for those choosing geriatrics.
 5. Invest in effective team development and training.
 6. Offer better work-life balance.
 7. Use telehealth and wearable technology effectively.
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Fusion cares.

We're passionate about being able to help nurses and hospitals navigate this new future.

Our elders need to be taken care of, and we want to provide stable jobs for up-and-coming talent. In a way, they ensure that for each other. We are dedicated to finding you the right professionals to fit your needs. When you're looking for talented healthcare professionals who truly care, we'll send them your way.



“These people aren’t just Room #7 or Room #4—these are people who have had rich and full lives. They need someone who cares about their story.”

- Wendi McGarity, Fusion traveler

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1. <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/human-capital-and-risk/survey-73-of-baby-boomer-nurses-plan-to-retire-in-3-years.html>
2. <http://www.healthspancampaign.org/2016/03/24/why-we-need-more-geriatricians-and-how-we-can-get-there/>
3. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-healthcare-nursing/short-on-staff-nursing-crisis-strains-u-s-hospitals-idUSKBN1CP0BD>
4. http://www.familymed.uci.edu/PDFs/Positioning_Medical_Students_Geriatic_Imperative_Nguyen_et_al_2013.pdf
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