English and Chinese in the U.S.A. and Taiwan were reviewed. Analyses showed both countries mainly use tax dollars to fund HCBS. Although both countries have similar service categories, USA lack a clear organization scheme whereas Taiwan has detailed and clear services provisions. Workforce quality and shortage were common challenges for both countries, especially from culture perceptive. Recommendations for USA include expanded funding pool, better coordination between agencies, and rebalancing HCBS and institutional care with limited budget. Recommendations for Taiwan include expanded service coverage and quality to reduce disparity in rural areas, and providing more support for informal caregivers.

Session 3345 (Paper)

BROADENING THE VIEW OF GERONTOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AMONG AMERICAN MINORITY POPULATIONS: AN ECOLOGICAL EXPLORATORY STUDY

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A significant public health concern with regards to increasing rates of Alzheimer’s is that it disproportionately affects minority groups in the United States. The present ecological exploratory study uses secondary aggregate data from the fifty United States in the year of 2019. The purpose of this study was to address the disparities in Alzheimer’s in minority populations in the US and explore associated factors. The “minority” populations considered were African American and Latino populations, and the “majority” population was referred to as “white”. The data was extracted from the United States Census Bureau, the CDC National Center for Health Statistics, and the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Dataset. The prevalence rates of Alzheimer’s disease are greatest in both older Latinos (12.2%) and African Americans (13.8%), compared to older whites (10.3%) in the investigated time period. Our results showed that being over 65 years old (p=.009), with a below-average ($62,843) median household income (p=.024), history of stroke (p=.029), and being a part of the Latino population (p=.036), were significantly associated with Alzheimer’s mortality rates in the United States. By identifying disparities in access to Alzheimer’s healthcare and at-risk communities, more comprehensive intervention strategies can be developed to promote change and advocate for more Alzheimer’s education and resource allocation for minority populations.

DIFFERENCES IN GERIATRIC-FOCUSED EDUCATION PREPARATION AND BELIEFS ABOUT PROVIDING CARE TO OLDER PATIENTS IN GHANA

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With the increasing growth rate of older persons and a rise in related illnesses in Ghana, it is vital that health practitioners are equipped with geriatric-oriented knowledge and expertise to provide the needed services to geriatric patients. The purpose of this study was to examine (i) the differences in the level of geriatric-focused educational preparation between graduating medical and nursing students in a Ghanaian public institution, and (ii) the association between educational preparation and students’ beliefs about providing care to geriatric patients. The study hypothesized that students with more positive beliefs will be linked to higher educational preparation. Descriptive and inferential statistics were conducted (n=136 students). Findings show significant differences in the educational preparation of medical and nursing students (t[134] = -3.790, p < .001). Graduating nursing students, comparatively, had higher educational preparation (M=23.14, SD=3.30) than medical students (M=21.14, SD=2.76). However, there was no significant association between students’ educational preparation and their beliefs about geriatric care. The findings underscore the need for extensive or more focused training. Further, the association between beliefs and educational preparation warrants further exploration. The need to examine the social cultural environment within which the research participants reside are discussed.

ONLINE GERONTOLOGY COURSES: ISSUES OF EQUITY

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The COVID-19 Pandemic changed higher education in several significant ways. The most significant impact was on methods of course delivery. In March 2020, all educational institutions changed their methods of instruction to fully online instruction. It happened almost overnight and left the students as well as the instructors unprepared for the unanticipated metamorphosis . The sudden and unanticipated change in the method of instruction and delivery of course contents also highlighted issues of equity. There appeared to be high levels of inequity in the use of technology across school and college campuses. A survey of students conducted by the author at the University of Louisiana at Monroe revealed different types of inequity such as, lack of finances to buy equipment, lack of training in the use of technology, and lack of personal space to study from home. A significant percentage of student population at ULM consists of first-generation college students. These students were impacted the most by the new methods of course delivery. Additionally, the author looked up similar surveys at other educational institutions and conducted a meta-analysis of published studies. This paper presents these findings.

THE STATE OF GERONTOLOGICAL TRAINING IN GHANA: IMPLICATIONS FOR A SPECIALIZED WORKFORCE AND THE AGING POPULATION

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The rise in older population in Ghana is accompanied by several challenges that may require trained professionals with specialized knowledge in geriatrics and gerontology to help address. Extensive review of existing literature, however,
indicates a lack of comprehensive geriatric focused training in Ghana’s education system. Unfortunately, the scope of this training deficiency, potential impact on the geriatric workforce, as well as the health and wellbeing of the aging population on the national level have not been extensively examined. With the older adult population set to increase over the next few years, the need for geriatric-trained human service professionals in diverse disciplines, including medicine, nursing, psychology, social work and public health has become more pronounced. This paper is a review of the current state of gerontological education in higher institutions in Ghana. Specifically, authors examined (1) current geriatric-focused training programs available to students in all public/government owned institutions, (2) existing national level programs, and policies addressing training deficiencies, and (3) the implications of findings for future geriatric workforce as well as the health and wellbeing of older Ghanaians. The findings call attention to the need for a nationwide geriatric-focused training system and policies aimed at prioritizing specialized care for the older population. Culturally appropriate recommendations for integrating gerontological training and education in tertiary institutions are discussed. Guidelines and standards based on the Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) Competencies for Undergraduate and Graduate Education are proposed.

WHAT DO ISRAELI GERONTOLOGY STUDENTS THINK ABOUT MEDICAL MARIJUANA USE FOR ALZHEIMER’S AND PARKINSON’S DISEASE?
Offer Edelstein,1 Richard Isralowitz,2 Oren Wacht,2 Alexander Reznik,2 and Yaacov Bachner,1, 1. Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, HaDarom, Israel, 2. Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Be’er-Sheva, HaDarom, Israel, 3. Ben-Gurion University, Beer-Sheva, HaDarom, Israel

Aims: The aims of the current study were as follows: 1) to assess gerontology graduate students’ beliefs about medical marijuana’s (MMJ) effectiveness for two common age-related conditions - Alzheimer’s (AD) and Parkinson’s disease (PD); 2) to assess students’ beliefs and attitudes toward MMJ; 3) to explore associations linking background characteristics, MMJ-related attitudes and beliefs, and beliefs about the MMJ effectiveness for AD and PD.

Method: A sample of 104 (84 women and 20 men) gerontology graduate students voluntarily participated in an anonymous online survey.

Results: The vast majority (95%) of the participants indicated they had no formal education about MMJ and reported being unprepared to answer clients’ MMJ-related questions (84.6%). Most of the participants believed that MMJ is effective for use with AD (70.2%) and PD (80.8%) patients. Participants reported favorable beliefs about MMJ benefits, concerns about risks, the need for training, and positive attitudes toward recreational marijuana use legalization. Prior marijuana use (e.g., self-use, friends or family) was found to be associated with more positive beliefs about MMJ benefits, risks, and its legalization for recreational purposes. Prior marijuana use was the only factor associated with the belief that MMJ is an effective therapy for use with individuals diagnosed with AD or PD.

Conclusions: The study findings stress the need for students’ MMJ education in order to provide future gerontology service providers with the necessary knowledge and ability to address clients’ questions about MMJ use. Efforts to develop curricula and training programs need to be promoted.

Session 3350 (Symposium)
CONGREGATIONAL UPDATE
Chair: Brian Lindberg
This popular annual session will provide cutting-edge information on what the 117th Congress has and has not accomplished to date, and what may be left for the First Session. Speakers will discuss key issues such as pandemic relief, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and the Older Americans Act.

Session 3355 (Symposium)
DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND COPING AMONG OLDER ADULTS: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND VIRTUAL REALITY PLATFORM DEVELOPMENT
Chair: Zhen Cong
This symposium included 4 studies that use national and regional data to examine older adults’ disaster preparedness and coping. The first study examined age differences in preparedness for the continuation of COVID-19 with a sample of 443 residents in Dallas, TX. The findings highlight older adults’ resilience and special needs for different types of support during the pandemic. The second study examined the association of having COVID-19 and intergenerational relationships using the COVID-19 module of the Health and Retirement Study with a sample of 3266 respondents. Using a national sample of 1,467 respondents from the 2017 U.S. National Household Survey, the third study examined age differences relationships among the type of disasters (i.e., disasters with different lead-time), response efficacy, and disaster preparedness. The findings highlighted older adults’ unique vulnerability and resilience in different types of disasters. The fourth study discussed a pilot virtual reality platform under development to assist older adults to develop tailored household emergency preparedness plans and practice those plans with simulated extreme weather conditions and warnings for older adults to practice disaster response and develop relevant knowledge and skills as well as test and revise their emergency preparedness plans. Overall, this symposium emphasizes the uniqueness of older adults’ needs, vulnerability, and resilience to disasters.

AGE DIFFERENCES IN PREPAREDNESS FOR THE CONTINUATION OF COVID-19: IMPORTANT ROLES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT
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This study examined the association between age and preparedness for the continuation of COVID-19. The moderation effects of three types of social support, namely, emotional, financial, and instrumental assistance were also tested. Using a sample of 443 adults in Dallas county which