

Seniors and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living



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Introduction to Instrumental Activities of Daily Living

Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL) are activities that allow an individual to live independently within a community. IADLs include but are not limited to: cleaning and maintaining a house, managing personal finances, moving within a community, preparing meals, partaking in hobbies, extracurriculars, and social events. All individuals complete IADLs in efforts remain independent and maintain quality of life.

Overview of Seniors

Although different sources have different considerations for the age of senior citizens, for the purpose of this paper seniors will be recognized as individuals who are 65 and older. Nationally, the demographics of seniors are changing. The first group of baby boomers, born between the years 1946 and 1964, became seniors in 2011. Since 2011, numerous organizations and programs are working to better serve this large and growing demographic. Communities are aware of the growing demands of the senior populations and are investing in programs that assist individuals who are aging to remain in their home.

Cleaning and maintaining a house

Seniors may find cleaning and maintaining a house difficult to impossible. One factor may include the physical exertion it takes to complete household tasks, such as climbing stairs, bending down to clean floors, and operating a heavy vacuum. If the individual chooses to stay in his/her home, it will be paramount to complete safe-proofing the home. Other safety challenges that can be overlooked are tripping hazards such as cords or rugs and slippery surfaces such as the shower floor. It will be important for the individual to understand personal capacities and to prepare the home for safety.

Managing Finances

Managing money is still an important skill to have later in life. In the current climate, it is important for seniors to be aware of the current scams and frauds being used by others to obtain their money. Seniors are being targeted for scams because they are viewed as a vulnerable population and may be experiencing cognitive decline. Seniors also have an increased likelihood of being victim to scams because they may live alone or with a partner similar aged and may not be aware of current scams (Grant, 2017).

Another transition this population is experiencing is the change from using primarily bills of money and paper checks to cards and apps to exchange

currency. Seniors are learning new ways of handling and exchanging money, which has created barriers and concerns.

Moving Within the Community

Seniors typically confront the scenario of whether or not they should have their license revoked due to situations like slower reaction time, diminishing eye sight, and feeling uncomfortable operating a motor vehicle. These changes in skill sets can be identified in the cognitive, sensory, and motor skills seniors experience. This transition in life can be daunting. It is found that seniors feel a loss of independence and control once their license is revoked, which causes them to reduce the amount of places they visit and attend (Shirgaokar, 2016). The National Council on Aging (2015) found that most people anticipate a time they will have to give up their license and are interested in accessing better public transportation as it allows individuals to navigate the community and complete tasks.

When seniors begin to decrease the number of places and activities they partake in in a community, they begin to become at risk of isolation. Isolation happens when one is separated from other people and their environment outside of the home. Seniors are at risk of isolation if they live alone, experience major life transitions -losing his/her license, and having a small social network or inadequate social support (Elder & Retrum, 2012). Isolation can be combated by educating seniors of different community resources, such as community activities, breakfast or lunch ins aimed for seniors, church communities, community events, and programs aimed for seniors.

Preparing Meals

The National Institute on Aging reports there are different barriers seniors experience which impact the likelihood of a person making nutritious meals for him/herself. These barriers include, disinterest in eating alone, problems chewing food, difficulties swallowing food, food tastes are changing, not feeling hungry, physical problems making it challenging to create and eat a meal, food and medication interactions, and weight concerns. As seniors may encounter these barriers when it comes to preparing and eating meals, it is important he/she continues to talk to the doctor and his/her support system about what the experiences. By keeping others informed, seniors can reduce the risk of not obtaining and ingesting a proper and nutritious diet as nutritious diets play a role in a person's overall health and well-being (National Institute on Aging, 2017).

Medications

Medications play an important role in health care as individuals age. Medications may help seniors live longer and more independently, but also create different safety concerns. One concern is that as individuals age, he/she may be prescribed more medications which creates a risk of drug interactions, mix-ups, and the potential for an increase in side-effects. Different age-related challenges, such as memory loss, ability to open medication container, and poor eyesight, can make it more difficult for taking the medication correctly and remembering to take the medications at the correct time (Pfizer Inc., 2011).

Communication

Some seniors may experience difficulty keeping updated with modern technology. Although, a study found that the use of cell phones is associated with increased health, self-care, and independence amongst seniors. Cell phones were found to help seniors perform daily tasks and keep them connected to family and friends. Different factors impact senior's views of technology, which include awareness about the technology, the positive value of technology, accessibility, increase social support, independence and self-confidence (Navabi, Ghaffari, & Jannat-Alipoor, 2016). Communication devices allow seniors to live more independently as it connects them to resources and support systems.

Sources

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