

# U-M launches nursing home pilot program

The Institute of Gerontology at the University of Michigan is launching a pilot program to develop instructional materials aimed at helping unlicensed staff in nursing homes meet minimum competency standards called for by the state.

Ten nursing homes will participate in the first stage of the Nursing Home Staff Development Project, according to its director Jane L. Barney, a member of the Institute Staff.

"We will work with in-service directors of these homes to see whether the teaching and training materials are easy to use, and to find out what type of help they may need to develop orientation programs which are effective for their particular staffs and operations. We need to test the competency tools we have developed to see if the aides understand them and if the tools do realistically test their skills," she explains.

"We are also asking 80 nursing homes to participate in a survey of nurses aid training. We will interview in-service directors in these homes to gain a clearer understanding of what is currently being done across the state."

**MORE THAN 10** years of research on the quality of nursing home care in Michigan convinced Barney that if the training of nurses aides in the facilities could be improved, care for the elderly residents would also be improved.

Although nurses aides tend to be the prime caregivers in most nursing homes for the elderly, only a few states have established proficiency standards for them, she said. The project staff will be surveying every state government to see what regulations, if any, exist at present.

In 1978, the Michigan legislature passed a Nursing Home Reform Bill calling for the development of minimum criteria for the education and training of unlicensed nursing personnel. The Institute of Gerontology was enlisted to establish the standard and to develop methods for the competency testing. Other members of the project team include Cherie-Nan jansen of the Michigan State Department of Health, Jean K. Murdock of the Institute staff, and consultants in gerontology, nursing, education and professional organizations concerned with long term care.

For further information about the Nursing Home Staff Development Project, contact the Institute of Gerontology, U-M, 520 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48109; telephone (313) 764-7310.

## Aging produces farsighted problems

Dear Jo: What are some of the more common eye problems in older people?

Staff

The major change in the eye with aging is that the lens begins to lose its ability to accommodate. This makes it difficult for a person to focus on things close at hand. By the age of 45 almost everyone has lost this ability to a degree, making corrective lenses necessary for reading.

Loss of lens transparency is another age-related change. Although some loss occurs with all elderly, in certain people it progresses to the point of cloudiness (opacity). This is



gerontology  
**A. Jolayne Farrell**

called a cataract. When the cataract is significantly impairing the eyesight, vision can usually be restored through surgical removal of the opaque lens.

A serious eye disorder is glaucoma. With glaucoma there is an increase in the pressure

inside the eye. This pressure has its effect throughout the eye but is most damaging to the area where the optic nerve enters the eye. The wasting of the optic nerve results in loss of vision.

Anyone with signs or symptoms of eye disorder such as frequent tearing, headaches or visual aberrations (changes from normal) should see an eye specialist (ophthalmologist). It is dangerous to assume that any sign or symptom is merely a result of aging and must, therefore, be endured.

### Medical history

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Senior citizens can apply for discount cards at a number of housing and meal sites throughout Oakland County during September.

The identification cards allow seniors to be eligible for a number of local merchant discounts ranging from four to 50 cents. Discounts are offered on a number of items ranging from automobile parts to eyeglasses.

To participate a senior must be 60 or older and an Oakland County resident. The locations include:

- Tuesday, Mature Minglers, Holy Spirit Church, Orchard Lake & Green roads, West Bloomfield.
- Wednesday, Royal Oak Multi-purpose Center, 433 E. 11 Mile Road.
- Sept. 15, Farmer Jack Super Market, 13 Mile and Southfield Road.
- Sept. 24, Lake Orion Multi-Purpose Center, 571 S. Lapeer Road, Lake Orion.
- Sept. 26, Senior Citizen Gathering Place, Mercy Center, 28600 11 Mile Road, Farmington Hills.

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