



NURSING HOME CLINICAL ASSIGNMENT

GERIATRIC DEPRESSION

Course: TBD

Level of Student: Second or third year

Sphere of Care: Sphere 4 – Complex Chronic Disease / Rehabilitative Care / Supportive Care

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Identify differences in the presentation of depression in older adults compared to the general adult population.
- Evaluate the nurse's role in using different depression screening tools (PHQ-9 vs. GDS) in geriatric populations.
- Apply evidence-based resident interviewing skills to complete the screening tools for depression in older adults.
- Correctly interpret the findings of the screening tools to communicate the findings to clinical staff.
- Collaborate with the clinical coordinator and clinical staff regarding appropriate follow-up for residents with positive depression screening results.

AACN Essentials Alignment

Essentials Domains:

- Domain 2: Person-Centered Care
- Domain 4: Scholarship for the Nursing Discipline

Essential Concepts:

- Evidence-Based Practice

Essential Competencies:

- Competency 2.3 – Integrate assessment skills in practice: Ensures nurses can perform comprehensive, age-appropriate assessments.
- Competency 4.2 – Integrate best evidence into nursing practice: Emphasizes applying current evidence to improve care strategies.

Developed by Joshua Palmer, DNP, PMHNP-BC, RN, Megan Kazakoff, DNP, AGNP-C, RN, CNE, and Elizabeth A. Schlenk, PhD, RN, CNL, FAAN
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Essential Sub-Competencies:

- 2.3e: *Distinguish between normal and abnormal health findings.*
 - Supports clinical judgment in recognizing that depression in older adults may present with atypical or subtle signs rather than classic symptoms of depression
- 2.3f: *Apply nursing knowledge to gain a holistic perspective of the person, family, community, and population.*
 - Incorporates gerontology knowledge and the broader context of the older population's needs when assessing an individual patient.
- 4.2a: *Evaluate clinical practice to generate questions to improve nursing care.*
 - Encourages inquiry (e.g., questioning whether the PHQ-9 is optimal for older adults) and leads to researching better screening tools for geriatric depression.
- 4.2c: *Use best evidence in practice.*
 - Supports selecting and using the most evidence-supported tool—such as the GDS for an older patient—and applying evidence-based findings in clinical assessments.

Pre-Clinical Preparation Assignment

Students must review the following resources before the clinical experience:

- **National Institute on Aging.** (n.d.). *Depression and older adults*. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Retrieved March 10, 2025, from <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/mental-and-emotional-health/depression-and-older-adults>
 - Domain 2: Person-Centered Care: This article supports person-centered care in older adults diagnosed with depression with attention to how the normal aging process can increase the risk for depression.
 - Competency 2.3 – Integrate assessment skills in practice
 - 2.3f: *Apply nursing knowledge to gain a holistic perspective of the person, family, community, and population.*
 - Domain 4: Scholarship for the Nursing Discipline: This article supports scholarship by using evidence-based practice.
 - Competency 4.2 – Integrate best evidence into nursing practice
 - 4.2a: *Evaluate clinical practice to generate questions to improve nursing care.*

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- **Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing.** (2023). *Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS): General assessment series*. NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing. Retrieved March 10, 2025, from <https://hign.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/GDS%20General%20Assessment.pdf>
 - Domain 2: Person-Centered Care: This article supports person-centered care in assessment of depression in older adults.
 - Competency 2.3 – Integrate assessment skills in practice
 - 2.3e: *Distinguish between normal and abnormal health findings.*
 - Domain 4: Scholarship for the Nursing Discipline: This article supports scholarship by administering reliable and valid depression scales.
 - Competency 4.2 – Integrate best evidence into nursing practice
 - 4.2c: *Use best evidence in practice.*
- **Kroenke, K., Spitzer, R. L., & Williams, J. B.** (2001). The PHQ-9: Validity of a brief depression severity measure. *Journal of General Internal Medicine, 16*(9), 606–613. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1525-1497.2001.016009606.x>
- **American Psychological Association.** (n.d.). *Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9 & PHQ-2)*. Retrieved March 10, 2025, from <https://www.apa.org/depression-guideline/patient-health-questionnaire.pdf>

Clinical Assignment & Components

1. **Preparation:**
 - Download and print the **GDS-10** from [this link](#) and the **PHQ-9** from [this link](#) before the clinical experience.
 - Review the interpretation guidelines for both scales.
2. **Assessment:**
 - Conduct a depression screening with an older adult using the **GDS-10**.
 - Conduct a second depression screening with another older adult using the **PHQ-9**.
3. **Interpretation:**
 - Calculate and interpret the scores from both screenings using the respective interpretation guidelines.
 - Compare how the tools capture depressive symptoms in geriatric residents.
4. **Evaluation of Evidence:**
 - Identify key differences in how depression presents in older adults compared to the general adult population.

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- Reflect on the usability of each depression screening tool and discuss the interpretation of findings in the geriatric setting.
- Which screening tool provided a clearer picture of the resident's depressive symptoms? Did either tool seem to over- or under-identify depression?
- Identify treatment choices or care plan changes that were made/could be made based on assessment results.
- Based on your experience, which tool would you recommend for routine use in geriatric settings?

5. Metric to Measure Quality in the Nursing Home

- The metric to measure quality in the nursing home is incidence of reported suicidal ideation, which is a quality indicator of geriatric depression in the nursing home. The nursing home will provide quarterly reports on the incidence of reported suicidal ideation. This assignment directly addresses this quality metric.

Evaluation Criteria

Students will be assessed based on:

- **Completion of the assignment**
 - Both depression screenings (GDS & PHQ-9) are conducted and documented.
 - Interpretation of scores is provided and discussed.
 - Reflection on the effectiveness of each screening tool.
- **Follow-up actions:**
 - Any positive depression screening results must be discussed with the **clinical coordinator and appropriate nursing staff** to ensure resident safety and appropriate interventions.
- **Written Discussion:**
 - Summarize the findings from both assessments, including any observed differences in depression symptoms between older and younger populations.
 - Discuss follow-up considerations and how findings align with evidence-based practice.
- **Oral Report:**
 - Students will present their experience, findings, and reflections to **their peers in post-conference.**

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