



# Geropsychology: It's YOUR future!

## Discover the answers...Be a part of the solution...

**C**areer opportunities for students interested in psychology and aging are expanding. People 65 years old and older are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. By 2030 older adults will account for 20% of our nation's people, up from 13% today (DHHS, 2001). And, although there is a broad range of exciting opportunities in psychological research and practice focusing on older adults, there are not enough psychologists to keep pace with the increasing demand.

Geropsychology is the field within psychology devoted to the study of aging and the provision of clinical services for older adults. As with younger adults, a variety of mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression, affect older adults. In fact, older adults have the highest rates of suicide of any age group in the United States, and depression is suicide's foremost risk factor. In addition, stressors common in late life, such as loss of loved ones, relocation, medical conditions, caregiving demands, change in employment status, and poverty, significantly affect the health and independence of older adults. Geropsychologists address these and other issues as diverse as family relationships, memory, sexuality, mental capacity assessment, health promotion, and substance abuse.

Through their research, psychologists have contributed significantly to the understanding and treatment of the major health concerns of our time: heart disease, cancer, mental disorders, dementia, chronic pain, and arthritis, among others. Geropsychologists are at the forefront of research on questions related to health and aging. Why are most older adults successful in adapting to the stressors of late life, while others become suicidal? Why do most older adults remain mentally sharp, while others have memory problems? Research on the aging brain provides clues to the risks

and protective factors for mental disorders relevant to individuals across the life span.

It is an exciting time for geropsychology! In 2002, Congress approved specific funding for psychology education and training programs focusing on geropsychology. In 2003 the *Guidelines for Psychological Practice With Older Adults* became official policy of the American Psychological Association (APA). It's a time of growth for geropsychology. The number of older adults is growing, there is a growing understanding and support for efforts to address their mental and behavioral health needs, and career opportunities in psychology and aging are growing.

Visit the following Web sites to see if geropsychology is a profession YOU might like to grow along with!!

### Education and Training Opportunities

♦ <http://apadiv20.php.ufl.edu/>

**APA Division 20** (Adult Development and Aging) has a *Guide to Graduate Study in the Psychology of Adult Development and Aging*, which provides information on graduate programs offering specialization in adult development and aging. Sample syllabi for undergraduate and graduate adult development and aging courses and information on student award competitions are also available.

♦ <http://www.geropsych.org>

**APA Division 12, Section II** (Clinical Geropsychology) offers the *Directory of Predoctoral Internships With Clinical Geropsychology Training Opportunities and Postdoctoral Clinical Geropsychology Fellowships*. Additional information on research funding, student research and travel award competitions, and public policy updates is available.

♦ [http://www.va.gov/oa/AHE\\_default.asp](http://www.va.gov/oa/AHE_default.asp)

### The Department of Veterans Affairs

The VA provides training to more than 32,000 students in the health professions each year, including psychologists. Information is available on a range of educational opportunities offered, including those in geropsychology, chronic mental illness, schizophrenia, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, dementia, and substance abuse. Links to VA jobs in these areas are also listed. A description and list of VA sites providing psychology postdoctoral research and clinical fellowships are available at <http://www.va.gov/oa/fellowships/psychology.asp>.

### Research Opportunities

♦ [http://www.appliedgerontology.org/cag\\_ld.cfm](http://www.appliedgerontology.org/cag_ld.cfm)

**The Edward R. Roybal Centers for Research on Applied Gerontology** conduct research that can be applied to the problems older persons face. Research is being conducted in areas such as preventing frailty by exercise and strength training, improving driving ability of older drivers, and providing peer-support for Alzheimer's caregivers.

♦ <http://www.mirecc.med.va.gov/national-mirecc-overview.shtml>

**The VA Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Centers (MIRECC)** generate new knowledge about the causes and treatments of mental disorders and use this information to enhance the quality of veterans' lives and their recovery from mental disorders. A Special Fellowship Program in Advanced Psychiatry and Psychology that provides



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clinical research training in mental health priority areas is described at <http://www.mirecc.med.va.gov/MIRECC-fellowship.shtml>.

◆ [www.geron.org](http://www.geron.org)

**The Gerontological Society of America (GSA)** promotes the scientific study of aging. Gerontologists study the aging processes and individuals as they grow from middle age through late life. The Behavioral and Social Sciences Section of GSA is composed of behavioral and social scientists from many disciplinary backgrounds, including psychology, anthropology, economics, history, political science and sociology.

## Practice Opportunities

◆ <http://www1.va.gov/GeriatricsSHG/page.cfm?pg=3>

**The Department of Veteran Affairs** provides a variety of mental and behavioral health services for older adults and a wealth of practice opportunities in geropsychology. An overview of these programs, including geriatric medicine, research and evaluation, home and community-based long-term care, homeless programs, hospice and palliative care, and Alzheimer's/dementia care, is available.

◆ <http://www.avapl.org/factsheets.html>

**The Association of VA Psychological Leaders** has fact sheets that describe the range of work psychologists do at the VA in areas such as anxiety, substance abuse, cancer, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

◆ <http://www.wvu.edu/~pltc/>

**Psychologists in Long-Term Care** is a network of psychologists who provide mental health services in long-term care settings, including skilled nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, assisted living facilities, and congregate housing. Learn about the types of services psychologists provide in long-term care settings and view publications related to this area of practice.

◆ <http://www.careersinaging.com/careersinaging/index.html>

**The Association for Gerontology in Higher Education Careers in Aging** has information on different career tracks in gerontology and associated academic programs. Topics addressed include: Why study aging and older persons? How do you become a professional in aging? What jobs and careers are available?

◆ <http://www.geron.org/agework/index.html>

**The Gerontological Society of America AgeWork Career Center** has a job bank of careers in aging through which persons can view current openings and apply for positions online.

## Guidelines for Psychologists

◆ [http://www.apa.org/practice/Guidelines\\_for\\_Psychological\\_Practice\\_with\\_Older\\_Adults.pdf](http://www.apa.org/practice/Guidelines_for_Psychological_Practice_with_Older_Adults.pdf)

*The APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice With Older Adults* outline the skills and relevant issues in working with older adults.

## General Information on Psychology Education and Training

◆ <http://www.apa.org/students/>

**The American Psychological Association** offers student Web pages with information on careers in psychology, resources for undergraduate students, getting into graduate school, postdoctoral training information, and scholarships, grants and funding opportunities.

◆ <http://www.apa.org/apags/about.html>

**The American Psychological Association of Graduate Students (APAGS)** is composed of more than 40,000 graduate psychology students. APAGS develops, endorses, and disseminates information to students about relevant education and training issues, legislative positions and

developments, and future directions or changes in the field. APAGS creates and supports opportunities for students through scholarships and awards, association advocacy work, and other development activities.

◆ <http://www.appic.org/index.html>

**The Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC)** promotes quality training in professional psychology and provides assistance in matching students with training programs. Information on training resources for graduate and postdoctoral students and Web links to key organizations are provided.

## Additional information

The APA Office on Aging in the APA Public Interest Directorate serves as the coordination point for the association's activities pertaining to aging. It is an information and referral resource that strives to bring psychological knowledge to bear on discussions regarding matters that affect older adults and their families. Learn more by visiting our Web site,

<http://www.apa.org/pi/aging/>

or by calling 202-336-6046.

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