

Locating Old Age

Philip B. Stafford
Reaching 4 Excellence
Nov 15, 2007

The Medicalization of Old Age

- Privileges chronological time
- Focuses on the individualized, body as object

Medicalization of Old Age

- Overwhelming amount of medical care is delivered in a clinical setting
- A reimbursement system that differentially rewards acute over chronic care (viz nursing and therapy salaries)
- A disease model of old age takes precedence over an understanding of aging as a natural, entropic process
 - Exaggerated interest in longevity and anti-aging medicine
 - Bias towards disease research as opposed to basic biology
 - Precedence of cure over care
 - Medicine largely reactive and corrective rather than preventive in nature

“I’d like to manage at home as long as I can.” Health = Home

- Home as a repository of meaning
- As a practical support
- As a power base -- a sense of agency
- As a node in a social network
- As an aesthetic
- As a financial cushion
- As belonging in a community

Aging is not about time and the body, but about place, and the meaning of relationships.

“Health and disability refer to the balance between personal capability and environmental demand.”

Verbrugge & Jette, 1993

“Community is the smallest unit
of health.”

Wendell Berry

Our work is about creating good places to grow up and grow old.

Developing place-based system of care

- Training and professional development
 - Resituating the patient as an agent of change
- Integrating the housing and the health care systems
 - Telemedicine and Smart Houses
 - Living at Home/Block Nurse Program
 - Congregate housing with services
 - Green houses
 - Incorporating “sense of home” in health care environments
- Convergent strategic planning
 - Fall Prevention Models as a starting point

Citations

- Beattie, B.L. 2005. Fall Prevention: Making a Difference Through Collaboration. 2006. National Association of Area Agencies on Aging slide presentation. Access at above website.
- Berry, Wendell. 1995. "Health is Membership" IN Another Turn of the Crank. Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint.
- Coles, Robert. 1993. The Call of Service: A Witness to Idealism. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Falls Prevention Research and Initiative: The Center for Healthy Aging/NCOA.
<http://www.healthyagingprograms.org/content.asp?sectionid=98>
- Kane, R., Lum. T. , Cutler, L., Degenholz, H., & Yu, Tzy-Chyi (2007). "Resident Outcomes in Small-House Nursing Homes: A Longitudinal Evaluation of the Initial Green House Program." *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*. 55 (6): 832-839.
- Minkler, Merideth and Carroll L. Estes, eds. 1999. Critical Gerontology: Perspectives from Political and Moral Economy. Amityville, NY: Baywood.
- Sheehan, Nancy W. and Claudia E. Oakes. 2006. "Bringing Assisted Living Services into Congregate Housing: Housing Directors' Perspectives." *Journal of Aging and Social Policy*. 18(1): 65-86.
- Stafford, Philip. 2001. "When Community Planning Becomes Community Building: Place-Based Activism and the Creation of Good Places to Grow Old." IN L. Heumann, M. McCall, D.P. Boldy, eds. *Empowering Frail Elderly People*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- _____. 2003. "Homebodies: Voices of Place in a North American Community". In P. Stafford, ed., *Gray Areas: Ethnographic Encounters with Nursing Home Culture*. Santa Fe: SAR Press.
- The Living at Home/Block Nurse Program. The Elderberry Institute. <http://www.elderberry.org/>

Contact information

- Philip B. Stafford, Ph.D.
- Director, Center on Aging & Community,
Indiana Institute on Disability and Community
- Indiana University
- 2853 East Tenth St., Bloomington, IN 47408
- 812-855-2163
- staffor@indiana.edu