Geriatric Health Care Team

(Click on the position titles listed below to read a full description)

Geriatrician
Nurse Practitioner
Pharmacist
Physical Therapist
Physician Assistant
Registered Dietitian / Nutritionist
Registered Nurse
Social Worker
Speech-Language Pathologist
Geriatrician

What Is Geriatrics?

Geriatrics is a branch of medicine that focuses on health promotion and the prevention and treatment of disease and disability in later life.

Description:

A geriatrician is a medical doctor who is specially trained to prevent and manage the unique and, oftentimes, multiple health concerns of older adults. Older people may react to illness and disease differently than younger adults. Geriatricians are able to treat older patients, manage multiple disease symptoms, and develop care plans that address the special healthcare needs of older adults.

Educational background:

- A minimum of 90 semester hours of Undergraduate Study. Completion of a college major or baccalaureate degree is strongly recommended.
- Primary Degree: M.D. or D.O. (4 yrs.)
- Residency: Internal Medicine or Family Medicine (3 yrs.)
- Fellowship: fellowship in geriatrics (1-2 yrs.).

Certifications:

Primary Boards-Internal Medicine or Family Medicine

Specialty Boards-Geriatrics (through American Board of Internal Medicine [ABIM] or American Board of Family Medicine [ABFM])

Tuition:

Tuition at the University of Nebraska Medical Center for a resident of the state of Nebraska is approximately $111,970 for an MD degree based on rates for 2012-2013. This does not include living expenses and miscellaneous student fees.

Salary:

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2010 median pay for physicians and surgeons was $166,400.

What types of work do they do?

- Primary care providers in outpatient clinics
- Geriatric Assessment Clinic Consultants
- Medical directors of Nursing Homes and/or Hospices
- Hospitalists
- Medical Directors of Quality Improvement Organizations, Hospitals, Healthcare Organizations,
- Insurance Companies
- Researchers
- Home Care Provider (independent, PACE)
- Academics
What types of patients need to see a geriatrician?
While primary care physicians—general internists and family physicians—care for most older people, geriatricians frequently provide the primary care for older adults who have the most complicated medical and social problems. Also, because of their unique qualifications and training, geriatricians are often sought to provide consultations for the frailest of older persons.

A geriatrician should be consulted when:

- An older person’s condition causes considerable impairment and frailty. These patients tend to be over the age of 75 and coping with a number of diseases and disabilities, including cognitive (mental) problems.
- Family members and friends are feeling considerable stress as caregivers.


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Nurse Practitioner

Description:
A nurse practitioner (NP) is an advanced practice registered nurse who provides health care services similar to those of a physician. NPs may choose to specialize in family, pediatric or geriatric nursing. Common duties include diagnosing and treating illnesses and injuries, prescribing medications and educating patients.

Educational background:
There are two educational routes one can take to become a nurse practitioner. First, one can become a registered nurse by obtaining a bachelor’s degree in nursing (BSN) and then continue on to achieve a master’s degree as a nurse practitioner. The second route one can take to become a nurse practitioner is to obtain an associate’s degree in nursing (ADN), then a BSN and then a master’s degree.

1). Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing (BSN): program lengths vary from 18 months to 4 years.
2). Master’s degree as a nurse practitioner (MSN): 2-5 years graduate study

Certification and Licensure:
Most states require additional licensure to work as an advanced practice nurse. Advanced practice nurses operate in one of four roles: nurse practitioner, nurse anesthetist, nurse midwife or clinical nurse specialist. Licensing is regulated by individual states, and requirements vary; however, all NPs must first be licensed RNs with a master’s degree in one of the four advanced practice specialties. Some states mandate extra exams and professional experience. Many states require continuing education classes or maintenance of a national certification to renew a license.

The American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) are two organizations that offer national certification commonly recognized by state nursing boards. Certification usually requires passing an examination, and most organizations mandate continuing education to maintain the credentials. Available specialty examinations nurse practitioners may choose from include acute care, diabetes management, family care, school nursing, mental health, gerontology and pediatrics.

Tuition:
1). Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing (BSN): The 2012-2013 tuition for a resident of Nebraska at the University of Nebraska Medical Center is approximately $32,820 for the traditional BSN. This amount does not include living expenses and miscellaneous student fees.

2). Master of Science Degree in Nursing (MSN) Specialty Track at the University of Nebraska Medical Center: At the University of Nebraska Medical Center, to work toward the Nurse Practitioner (NP) designation, the student may choose an MSN specialty track. Graduates from these specialty tracks are eligible to take the Nurse Practitioner Certification Exam Required credit hours vary by specialty track. Required credits range, for example, from 39 for Women's Health NP to 66 for the dual/integrated Family NP/Psychiatric Mental Health NP. The 2012-1013 estimated tuition range for Nebraska residents at the University of Nebraska Medical Center for these examples would be from approximately $17,140-$29,007. This does not include living expenses, miscellaneous student fees, or undergraduate tuition.
Salary:

In early 2011, the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) conducted the 2011 AANP National Nurse Practitioner Compensation Survey. Based on this survey, the average base salary for a full-time NP (those who practiced clinically 35 hours or more per week) was $91,310.

What types of work do they do?

- Obtain medical histories and perform physical examinations
- Provide immunizations and other preventative care
- Diagnose and treat illness
- Identify, treat, and manage chronic diseases such as diabetes and arthritis
- Order and interpret diagnostic tests such as x-rays, blood work, and EKGs
- Prescribe Medications
- Prescribe physical therapy, massage therapy, and other rehabilitation therapy
- Perform procedures such as sutures, casting, cryotherapy, and skin biopsy

References


Pharmacist

Description:

Pharmacists provide information to patients about medications and their use and distribute drugs prescribed by physicians and other health practitioners. They advise physicians and other health practitioners on the selection, dosages, interactions, and side effects of medications. Pharmacists also monitor the health and progress of patients in response to drug therapy to ensure the safe and effective use of medication. Pharmacists must understand the use, clinical effects, and composition of drugs, including their chemical, biological, and physical properties.

Educational background:

- Pre-pharmacy requirements: A minimum of 90 semester hours including coursework in chemical, physical, and biological sciences.
- The Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) degree: 4 years
- Pharmacy Residency or Fellowship Programs: (1-2 years)
- MS or PhD degree: many colleges of pharmacy offer these degrees after completion of a PharmD degree. (2-5 years)

Licensure:

A license to practice pharmacy is required in all states, the District of Columbia, and all US territories. To obtain a license, the prospective pharmacist must graduate from a college of pharmacy accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) and pass a clinical examination as well as a state specific law exam. Some states also require a third exam on patient counseling or compounding. Practicing pharmacists can also obtain specialty board certification through exam after graduation and residency training.

Tuition:

Tuition for Nebraska Residents at the University of Nebraska Medical Center for 2012-2013 is approximately $73,310.00 for a PharmD degree. This does not include living expenses and miscellaneous student fees.

Salary:

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median annual wage for pharmacists was $111,570 in May 2010.
What types of work do they do?

- Fill prescriptions, verifying instructions from physicians on the proper amounts of medication to give to patients
- Check whether the prescription will interact negatively with other drugs that a patient is taking or conditions the patient has
- Instruct patients on how and when to take a prescribed medicine
- Advise patients on potential side effects they may experience from taking the medicine
- Advise patients about general health topics, such as diet, exercise, and managing stress, and on other issues, such as what equipment or supplies would be best for a health problem
- Complete insurance forms and work with insurance companies to be sure that patients get the medicines they need
- Oversee the work of pharmacy technicians and pharmacists in training (interns)
- Keep records and do other administrative tasks
- Teach other healthcare practitioners about proper medication therapies for patients
- Some pharmacists who own their store or manage a chain pharmacy spend more time on business activities, such as inventory management. Pharmacists also take continuing education throughout their career to keep up with the latest advances in pharmacological science.
- Pharmacists who work in universities or for pharmaceutical manufacturers are involved in researching and testing new medications.
- Clinical pharmacists work in hospitals and other healthcare settings. They spend little time dispensing prescriptions. Instead, they are involved in direct patient care. For example, they may go on rounds with a doctor and recommend medications to give to patients. They also counsel patients on how and when to take medications and monitor patients’ health.
- Consultant pharmacists advise healthcare facilities or insurance providers on how to make pharmacy services more efficient. They also may give advice directly to patients, such as helping seniors manage their prescriptions.
- Some pharmacists work full time or part time as college professors.

References


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University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Pharmacy. (2012). “Programs”.

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Physical Therapist

Description:

Physical therapists (PTs) are highly-educated, licensed health care professionals who can help patients reduce pain and improve or restore mobility - in many cases without expensive surgery and often reducing the need for long-term use of prescription medications and their side effects. Physical therapists can teach patients how to prevent or manage their condition so that they will achieve long-term health benefits. PTs examine each individual and develop a plan, using treatment techniques to promote the ability to move, reduce pain, restore function, and prevent disability. In addition, PTs work with individuals to prevent the loss of mobility before it occurs by developing fitness- and wellness-oriented programs for healthier and more active lifestyles.

Educational Background:

- Physical Therapy Program requirements: Most require a Bachelor's Degree (4 years)
- Other programs offer a 3+3 curricular format in which 3 years of specific pre-professional (undergraduate/pre-PT) courses must be taken before the student can advance into a 3-year professional PT program.
- Freshman Entry: A few programs recruit all or a portion of students directly from high school into guaranteed admission programs. High school students accepted into these programs are guaranteed entry into the professional phase of the PT program pending the completion of specific undergraduate courses and any other stated contingencies (eg, minimum GPA).
- Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) Degree (3 years for most programs)
- Master of Physical Therapy (MPT) or Master of Science in Physical Therapy (MSPT) Degree (2 yrs)
- *The Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) will require all programs to offer the DPT degree effective December 31, 2015.
- Clinical Residency and Clinical Fellowships:
- Licensed physical therapists may choose to pursue a residency or fellowship program to enhance their knowledge and practice.
- Specialty Certification:
  Physical therapists have the opportunity to become board-certified clinical specialists through the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (ABPTS).

Licensure:

After graduation, candidates must pass a state-administered national exam. Other requirements for physical therapy practice vary from state to state according to physical therapy practice acts or state regulations governing physical therapy.

PTs are licensed in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Licensure is required in each state in which a physical therapist practices and must be renewed on a regular basis, with a majority of states requiring continuing education as a requirement for renewal. PTs
Tuition:

The 2012-2013 tuition for a resident of Nebraska for a DPT degree at the University of Nebraska Medical Center is approximately $43,800. This does not include living expenses or miscellaneous student fees.

Salary:

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median annual wage of physical therapists was $76,310 in May 2010.

Where do physical therapists practice?

Although many physical therapists practice in hospitals, more than 80 percent practice in:

- Outpatient clinics or offices
- Inpatient rehabilitation facilities
- Skilled nursing homes, extended care, or sub-acute facilities
- Education or research centers
- Schools
- Hospices
- Industrial, workplace, or other occupational environments
- Fitness centers and sports training facilities

References


Physician Assistant

Description:
A physician assistant (PA) is a medical professional who works as part of a team with a doctor. A PA is a graduate of an accredited PA educational program who is nationally certified and state-licensed to practice medicine with the supervision of a physician. PAs perform physical examinations, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret lab tests, perform procedures, assist in surgery, provide patient education and counseling and make rounds in hospitals and nursing homes. All 50 states and the District of Columbia allow PAs to practice and prescribe medications.

Educational Background:
Pre-PA Program requirements: At least two years of college courses in basic science and behavioral sciences. Graduation from a PA program: Approximately 27 semester hours (this typically leads to a Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) degree).

Licensure:
Upon graduation from an accredited program, PAs are eligible to take the national certifying examination administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistant (NCCPA). Only those passing the examination can use the title of “Physician Assistant-Certified (PA-C).” In order to maintain national certification, PAs must complete 100 hours of Continuing Medical Education (CME) every two years and take a recertification exam every six years.

Tuition:
The tuition to obtain a Master of Physician Assistant Studies at the University of Nebraska Medical Center for a resident of the state of Nebraska is approximately $35,055 (based on 2012-2013 tuition rates). This amount does not include living expenses and miscellaneous student fees.

Salary:
According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, The median annual wage of physician assistants was $86,410 in May 2010.

What types of work do Physician Assistants do?
A hallmark of physician assistant practice is that PAs provide a broad range of medical and surgical services as part of a team with their supervising physicians. As part of the physician/PA team:

- PAs diagnose and treat illness and injuries
- Perform physical examinations
- Order and interpret diagnostic tests
- Prescribe medications
- Provide patient education and preventive health care counseling
- Perform therapeutic procedures such as suturing lacerations and applying casts
PAs are employed in virtually all types of health care settings -- hospitals, clinics, private physician offices, schools, and HMO's. Although the majority of PAs work in primary care medicine -- family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, and obstetrics and gynecology -- many also work in specialty medicine, such as cardiothoracic surgery and orthopedics. Voluntary specialty certification in some areas will soon be available. PAs may also work in the areas of medical education, health administration and research.

References


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Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist

Description:
A Registered Dietitian (RD) is a food and nutrition expert who practices in the field of dietetics. A Registered Dietitian must meet the education criteria given below and earn the RD credential. Dietetics is the art and science of applying the principles of food and nutrition to health. Although frequently used to refer to a Registered Dietitian, the term “nutritionist” is not a nationally accredited credential.

Educational Background:
- Bachelor’s degree (from an accredited U.S. university or college with coursework approved by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics [ACEND])
- Internship (completion of 1200 hours of supervised practice in a program accredited by ACEND)

Licensure/Certification:
- National Registry Examination (administered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration)
- Licensure (many states have regulatory laws for food and nutrition practitioners; all states accept the RD credential for state licensure purposes)
- Board certification (awarded by the Commission on Dietetic Registration in specialty areas such as Gerontological Nutrition, Oncology Nutrition, Pediatric Nutrition, Renal Nutrition, and Sports Dietetics)
- RD’s may also hold additional certifications in specialized areas of practice such as Certified Diabetes Educator, Certified Nutrition Support Clinician, and Certified Personal Trainer. These certifications are granted by other medical and nutrition credentialing organizations.

Tuition:
Resident tuition (2012-2013 rates) for the UNMC Dietetic Internship Program is $6010.00. This does not include living expenses and miscellaneous student fees.

Salary:
According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2010 median salary for a Registered Dietician was $53,250 per year.

Where do Dietitians work?
- Hospitals, clinics and other health-care facilities
- Consulting in long term care facilities
- Sports nutrition and corporate wellness programs
- Private practice
- Food and nutrition related business and industries
- Community and public health settings
- Research
- Universities and medical centers in education
What types of patients need to see a Registered Dietitian?

- When there is a concern regarding the adequacy of oral intake
- When there is a history of unintentional weight loss
- When nutrition education is indicated (sodium intake, diabetes, fiber intake, need for increased calories and protein intake, etc.)
- When tube feeding/TPN indicated

References


Registered Nurse

Description:
The practice of nursing means assisting individuals or groups to maintain or attain optimal health, implementing a strategy of care to accomplish defined goals and evaluating responses to care and treatment. This practice includes, but is not limited to, initiating and maintaining comfort measures, promoting and supporting human functions and responses, establishing an environment conducive to well-being, providing health counseling and teaching, and collaborating on certain aspects of the health regimen. This practice is based on understanding the human condition across the life span and the relationship of the individual within the environment.

Educational Background:
The three major educational paths to registered nursing are:

- Graduation from an Associate Degree nursing program (2-3 years of college level study with an emphasis on technical skills) earning the degree of ASN/AAS in nursing.
- Graduation with a three-year (diploma) certificate from a hospital-based school of nursing (non-degree). Few of these programs remain in the U.S.
- Graduation from a college or university with a Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing (a 4-5 year program conferring the BSN/BA degree with enhanced emphasis on leadership and research as well as technical skills and clinical reasoning).
- There are a variety of areas of study at the post baccalaureate, masters level, or doctoral level. Programs prepare scholars as scientists, researchers, and clinical innovators in health care.

The College of Nursing at UNMC offers these undergraduate and graduate programs in nursing:

- Undergraduate:
  - Bachelor of Science in Nursing-Traditional
  - Bachelor of Science in Nursing-Accelerated
  - Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing

Graduate:

- Master of Science in Nursing
- Post Master’s Certificate
- Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing

Tuition:
The 2012-2013 estimated tuition for a resident of Nebraska is approximately $32,820 for the traditional BSN. This amount does not include living expenses and miscellaneous student fees.

Salary:
According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median annual earnings of registered nurses as of May, 2010 were $64,690.
Licensing:

- Graduation from an accredited nursing program
- NCLEX-RN: National Council Licensure Examination

RN Certification:

Certification is a process by which a nongovernmental agency validates, based upon predetermined standards, an individual nurse's qualifications for practice in a defined functional or clinical area of nursing.

Most certification programs are created, sponsored or affiliated with professional associations and trade organizations interested in raising standards. Certifications are earned through an assessment process and, in general, must be renewed periodically. Certification credentials are nationally recognized and portable, meaning the credential is accepted from one hospital to another.

Many nurses who choose a clinical specialty area of nursing become certified in that area, signifying that they possess expert knowledge. Registered nurses are not required to be certified in a certain specialty by law. State licensure provides the legal authority for an individual to practice professional nursing, while certification is voluntary, obtained through certifying organizations and validates knowledge, skills, abilities and experience in areas beyond the scope of RN licensure.

What types of work do they do?

Ambulatory care • Critical care • Emergency or trauma • Holistic health • Home health care Hospice and palliative care • Infusion • Long-term care • Medical-surgical • Occupational health Perianesthesia • Perioperative • Psychiatric • Radiologic • Rehabilitation • Transplant • Academics

References


Social Worker

Description:
The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.

Social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients. “Clients” is used inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice.

Educational Background:
To be a social worker, one must have a degree in social work from a college or university program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.

- The undergraduate degree is the Bachelor of Social Work or BSW: (4 years)
- A MSW is required to provide therapy. (Approx. 2 years)
- A DSW or PhD is useful for doing research or teaching at the university level. (2-3 years)

Licensure:
All states and the District of Columbia have some licensure, certification, or registration requirement, but the regulations vary.

Tuition:
Tuition for Nebraska residents at the University of Nebraska at Omaha to obtain a BSW (based on 2012-2013 tuition prices) is approximately $23,600. Tuition for Nebraska residents at the University of Nebraska at Omaha to obtain a Master of Social Work in the Advanced Standing Program (where the student already has a Bachelor’s Degree in Social Work) is $9,564.00. This does not include living expenses or miscellaneous student fees.

Salary:
The median expected annual salary for a typical Social Worker (MSW) in the United States is $55,904.
What types of work do they do?

There are two main types of social workers: direct-service social workers, who help people solve and cope with problems in their everyday lives, and clinical social workers, who diagnose and treat mental, behavioral, and emotional issues.

Social workers work in a variety of settings, including mental health clinics, schools, hospitals, and private practices. They generally work full time and may need to work evenings and weekends.

Direct-service social workers typically do the following:

- Identify people who need help
- Assess clients’ needs, situations, strengths, and support networks to determine their goals
- Develop plans to improve their clients’ well-being
- Help clients adjust to changes and challenges in their lives, such as illness, divorce, or unemployment
- Research and refer clients to community resources, such as food stamps, child care, and healthcare
- Help clients work with government agencies to apply for and receive benefits such as Medicare
- Respond to crisis situations, such as natural disasters or child abuse
- Advocate for and help clients get resources that would improve their well-being
- Follow up with clients to ensure that their situations have improved
- Evaluate services provided to ensure that they are effective

Clinical social workers, also called licensed clinical social workers, typically do the following:

- Diagnose and treat mental, behavioral, and emotional disorders, including anxiety and depression
- Provide individual, group, family, and couples therapy
- Assess clients’ histories, backgrounds, and situations to understand their needs, as well as their strengths and weaknesses
- Develop a treatment plan with the client, doctors, and other healthcare professionals
- Encourage clients to discuss their emotions and experiences to develop a better understanding of themselves and their relationships
- Help clients adjust to changes in their life, such as a divorce or being laid-off
- Work with clients to develop strategies to change behavior or cope with difficult situations
- Refer clients to other resources or services, such as support groups or other mental health professionals
- Evaluate their clients’ progress and, if necessary, adjust the treatment plan

Many clinical social workers work in private practice. Some work in a group practice with other social workers or mental health professionals. Others work alone in a solo practice.
References


Speech-Language Pathologist

**Description:**
Working with the full range of human communication and its disorders, speech-language pathologists evaluate and diagnose speech, language, cognitive-communication and swallowing disorders. Speech-language pathologists treat speech, language, cognitive-communication and swallowing disorders in individuals of all ages, from infants to the elderly.

**Educational Background:**

- Bachelor’s Degree. On the undergraduate level, a strong arts and sciences focus is recommended, with course work in linguistics, phonetics, anatomy, psychology, human development, biology, physiology, mathematics, physical science, social/behavioral sciences and semantics. A program of study in communication sciences and disorders is available at the undergraduate level. (Approx. 4 yrs)
- Master’s Degree in Speech-Language Pathology: Applicants for the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-language Pathology (CCC-SLP) must earn a graduate degree. (Approx. 2 yrs.)
- Doctoral Degree: Some areas, such as college teaching, research, and private practice, require a doctoral degree. (2-5 yrs.)

**Certifications/Licensure:**
Speech-language pathologists must successfully complete the required clinical experiences and pass a national examination. Additionally, the individual must acquire the requisite knowledge and skills mandated by certification standards while enrolled in a program accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA).

In most states, speech-language pathologists and audiologists also must comply with state regulatory (licensure) standards to practice and/or have state education certification.

**Tuition:**
2012-2013 tuition rates to obtain a Master’s Degree in Speech Language Pathology at the University of Nebraska at Omaha for a Nebraska resident is approximately $10,055.00 for a student who has an undergraduate degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders. This does not include living expenses and miscellaneous student fees.

**Salary:**
According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, The median annual wage of speech-language pathologists was $66,920 in May 2010.
What types of work do they do?

In addition to the description above, speech language pathologists:

- Prepare future professionals in college and universities.
- Manage agencies, clinics, organizations, or private practices.
- Engage in research to enhance knowledge about human communication processes.
- Supervise and direct public school or clinical programs.
- Develop new methods and equipment to evaluate problems.
- Establish more effective treatments.
- Investigate behavioral patterns associated with communication disorders.

Speech-language pathologists often work as part of a team, which may include teachers, physicians, audiologists, psychologists, social workers, rehabilitation counselors and others. Corporate speech-language pathologists also work with employees to improve communication with their customers.

The practice and work of speech-language pathologists may take place in various settings:

- Public and private schools
- Hospitals
- Rehabilitation centers
- Short-term and long-term nursing care facilities
- Community clinics
- Colleges and universities
- Private practice offices
- State and local health departments
- State and federal government agencies
- Home health agencies (home care)
- Adult day care centers
- Centers for persons with developmental disabilities
- Research laboratories

References
