

NEWSLETTER

Thank you so much for your constant support of African Americans In Gerontology. We appreciate you as a member, friend, fan, and associate. Enjoy our newsletter.

Aisha C. Young MA, AAC

Championing the Aging Sciences - Oregon State University



At Oregon State University new opportunities continue to unfold for students interested in aging. The National Science Foundation (NSF) recently awarded a five year \$2.9 million grant to the University to support doctoral students in the study of aging. These students will participate in the NSF Integrated Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) program, joining a corps of researchers ready to meet 21st challenges. Interdisciplinary approaches are critical addressing the issues of our aging population. IGERT students will have the opportunity to focus in one of four research cores supporting successful aging, while also studying in a supplemental core. Research cores include: Diet & Genes, Psychosocial, Musculoskeletal and Gerontechnology. These cores include faculty from the Center for Healthy Aging Research who are among Oregon State's finest scientists.

Five to six doctoral students will be added to the IGERT in Aging Sciences program annually during the five year period. All IGERT students

will earn a minor in gerontology. They will also work with committed faculty mentors, have opportunities for internships and apprenticeships, and attend stimulating, relevant colloquia while working in outstanding research facilities. In addition to these resources, an NSF funded stipend coordinated with support from the Oregon State Graduate School make this program very attractive. The NSF IGERT Program has a special emphasis on the recruitment of underrepresented students.

Dr. Karen Hooker, a well known scientist in aging, is the Director of the IGERT in Aging Sciences. The program will develop alongside Oregon State's existing, excellent programs in gerontology and aging research. Interested students should visit the program website at: <http://www.hhs.oregonstate.edu/igert/> or contact Anne Hatley, Program Coordinator at 541-737-4993.



The African---American
Spiritual and Ethical
Guide to
End---of---Life Care
A Helpful and Hopeful
Resource For End---of---Life
Care and Planning

Gloria Thomas
Anderson,

a licensed master's social worker, educator and author, had no idea of the challenges faced by those confronting end---of---life issues until one of her relatives was rushed to the hospital with a medical emergency. When the nurse asked her if she had an advanced directive, Gloria's relative misunderstood and thought the nurse was trying to place her in a nursing home. She didn't know what an advanced directive was or why it was needful until Gloria explained it in a way that she could better understand.

Gloria began to ask other adults who were

African---American—including her parents—if they knew about advanced directives and found that most did not. Upon further research, she determined that an easy---to read, culturally sensitive resource would be beneficial to others, like her parents, prompting her to write the first edition of “The African---American Spiritual and Ethical Guide, to End---of---Life Care”. Racial disparity in healthcare has caused many people of color to lose trust in doctors and proposed treatment options. African---Americans' unique history, culture and generational values also impact end---of---life decision---making.

“The Guide” offers practical, spiritual and legal information that provides a springboard to talk about this sometimes difficult subject with loved ones. “The Guide” is widely used by hospices and healthcare providers throughout the United States as a patient educational resource to African---American patients and their families and is available to individuals, groups and organizations that want to offer a positive approach to end---of---life planning and care.

To learn more about

“The African---American Spiritual and Ethical Guide to End---of--- Life Care” and other resources to help educate, encourage and inspire others, please visit Gloria's websites:

www.hearttones.com

and

www.gloriathomasanderson.com.

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The Society of Certified Senior Advisors

The Society of Certified Senior Advisors is the world's largest nationally accredited membership organization educating and certifying professionals who serve seniors (accredited through the National Commission for Certifying Agencies). SCSA educates professionals to work more effectively with their senior clients by giving them a broad-based knowledge of the health, social and financial issues that are important to seniors. CSAs are able to integrate this knowledge into their professional practices, no matter what field they're in to directly impact the success of their business. It is a compliment to any education and business practice and I think you will find it of great benefit in dealing with your senior clients and their needs. I have negotiated a rate on your behalf that will allow you to enroll for a fraction of the cost! If you call Liz and mention that you are a member of AAIG, she can honor a \$500 discount for enrollment into either the webclass or live class!

www.csa.us Liz Gramm

lizg@csa.us or 888.828.9209

Dear National Healthcare Decisions Day Team:

It's been a month since National Healthcare Decisions Day 2011.

Thank you for all you did to make NHDD 2011 bigger and better than ever. Our participation numbers took a nice step up, but it was our activity level that saw a huge jump.

With only 240 survey responses (far less than a quarter of participants), we know the following:

- Over 1,262,446 medical staff members, employees, or organization members received either specific education on advance directives or received some sort of reminder about National Healthcare Decisions Day.
- Over 416,277 people attended public NHDD events.
- Over 3,504 advance directive documents were known to be executed--and that is with the vast majority of events expressly not focused on completing documents on the spot.
- Over 2 million people were exposed to NHDD via various social media outlets: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#).
- NHDD was mentioned in media items all across the country, including national, state, and local media of all sorts: TV, newspaper, blog, web, and radio.

Significantly, in the first two categories above, we had

numbers for 2011 that matched or exceeded those of our first three years combined! And, the social media effort was entirely new for 2011. What a great first year for that! Please see the preliminary "Report Card" for 2011 that is attached.

If you are among the 75% of participants that haven't responded to the survey, please do. I promise, it is short: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/6XCQW8K>

Please also mark your calendars for next year: **Monday, April 16, 2012**. The leading negative comment in the survey was about the date falling on a weekend, and, fortunately, that is resolved for next year.

Many of you commented that you appreciate my monthly updates and about how helpful the website content was. I'll keep them coming. To do even more on the website, I hope that you would please consider a donation to support NHDD. With more funds we can do more in terms of website content and media outreach, all of which helps the cause. Donations are tax-deductible, and the process is easy if you click here: <http://www.nhdd.org/p/donate.html>

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Featured Article: Me & My Alzheimer's by Norm McNamara

Hello, this is my most recent account of how I first found out how I was suffering from Alzheimer's (The early onset of) and how it has affected my day to day living and how its deteriorated since despite the help of some wonderful medics and medicine. I am writing this so all my friends can understand how far I have come with it and hopefully forgive but remember me in the future when the e mails stop. Also to all those who don't know me but who read it then thank you and I hope it helps if ever you or anybody of your friends/family are touched by this awful disease.

Always smiling

Norrms

P.S. Please don't pity me just come along for the ride and I will tell you it's not all doom and gloom!! LOL

The First Signs

It would be about nearly two years ago now when I visited my mum in my home town of Bolton in Lancashire and a great time was had (Apparently). Within three weeks of being up there my wife Elaine and I were talking one night when she mentioned it. I honestly thought she was kidding me or "Winding me up" as we say and it wasn't until much discussion was had, and I saw that worried look in her eye, that I thought something might be wrong.

I have suffered from heart failure for the last six years so we kind of put it down to the amount of medication I was taking for that ailment. Was I just kidding myself? Personally, at the time, I didn't think so but looking back now, probably. Over the coming months things used to crop up, only little things like forgetting who had rung up that day, or finding my shoes, on my own !! LOL. Also people and places seemed to fade away into a distant haze as if I had dreamt about most of them but they weren't really real. Believe it or not the penny dropped at a Football match. Typical!! LOL

Finding Out

I had visited my brother and we had gone to a local football match when, while having a coffee at half time underneath the stadium he turned to me and said something that made my hair stand on end and still does. He explained that while he had been driving down to London the other day he lost all his bearings and didn't know where he was or where he was going. This sounded so familiar but I didn't say anything at the time. He said eventually all came back to him thankfully and he went on his way as normal.

We talked about how our Father had died of Alzheimer's and also our gran on my Mum's side so the odds were stacked against us, but as usual, me being me I just laughed it off. It wasn't until we got home to Torquay that I repeated the same conversation with my darling wife Elaine and we both decided maybe a trip to my local Doctors was the best way to find out.

The test I was given was a very simple twenty questions test about Date, time, day month ECT. All came good apart from the date and that wasn't a major problem, apparently it was the time was taking to answer these simple questions. A decision was made to see a Brain Specialist at our local memory clinic.

The Truth

After what seemed like an age but was really only a month (my idea of time was getting mixed up by now) I saw a really nice doctor who gave me a complete physical and was then passed on to a nice Psychologist who sat me down and gave me what I have fondly since called a "Stupid Test" which lasts about one and a half hours. I didn't think I did too badly but that wasn't the case as very soon after I was asked to attend the local hospital for what is called a perfusion scan on my brain, this I did and it took about three quarter of an hour. This was on the Wednesday of the week and by Friday I had a phone call from the brain specialist saying he had the results and wanted to come round that day to see me!

I being me didn't want anybody coming round without Elaine being there and as she was out on a very rare and well deserved day out with our youngest daughter I decided to make the appointment for the following Monday at the clinic, bad move !!

After I had explained to Elaine the reason I didn't ring her (not a happy lady!!) we tried to bring forward the appointment but to no avail. It was the longest weekend of my life!!

I had convinced myself that the reason for my results coming back so soon was that they were completely clear and with him being such a nice Doctor didn't want me to worry unnecessarily. How wrong could I have been!!

As we sat there in front of him he asked me if I wanted to know the results. Being a kind of black and white of guy I couldn't understand why he would ask us to see him if he wasn't going to tell us?? I found out later that even when the results can be bad some people still don't want to know?? Very strange!! LOL Eventually after the pleasantries he said the results had shown a lack of Oxygen flowing on my left hand side of the brain, even less flowing on the right side of the brain but more worryingly much less flowing over the top of my brain which in itself was a sure sign of mild to moderate Alzheimer's.

When he told me I just laughed and said, can you repeat the last bit again please? But as Elaine gave my hand a squeeze I knew I already knew the answer. It went so quiet and I knew I couldn't look at my beautiful wife just yet as the tears would have flooded out. "I'm only 51 I blurted out! How? Why? When? All this was coming into my head but no words were leaving my mouth. I turned and looked at Elaine; she had tears in her eyes.

The only thing that ever upsets me is when one of my family is upset, I feel their hurt and cry their tears, I want to protect them all so much and keep them safe but when they are hurting I feel so helpless. Our hands gripped tighter as the doctor explained that there was a drug on the market called "Exelon" and even though it only had a 25% chance of slowing this awful thing down it had to be worth a try.

Featured Article Continued

The ride home in the car was a very quiet one and as I don't drive I knew Elaine was trying to concentrate on driving instead of what we had just been told. On getting home we fell into each other's arms and cried so hard we thought there would be no fluid left in our bodies, then Elaine being Elaine looked me squarely in the eyes and said "Right !! That's that, now, what are we going to do about it!! LOL. We both laughed so hard you would have thought we were both completely mad, not just me!! LOL.

It was decided to tell all our immediate family straight away as I thought that at least if they know from early on they will have time to get used to their Dad, Grandad going slowly round the bend!!LOL telling how much I loved my children/grandchildren how much I loved them and always will was very easy for me; it was the reason behind it that wasn't.

The Future

It's been a few months now since I started taking the "Exelon" but I still have what I call my "Cloudy Days". This is when I find it hard to coordinate anything I do, I can't get my words out and as for the computer, well, and that's a complete no. Whatever I write and no matter how hard concentrate I still write gibberish but the thing is when I'm typing it all seems perfectly normal to me!! LOL. Lately I have forgotten what day it is and even when I've looked at a calendar it still made no sense. Then yesterday while I was out for our usual ride out I was convinced it was the year 2006 and had very little memory of anything else since then for a short while until most of it came back. This is a sure sign that the Exelon isn't working as I know it should have kicked in by now. This disease is horrifying as it eats away at your self confidence bit by bit. It's like having two illnesses, Alzheimer's and knowing you have Alzheimer's. I know that one day I won't be able to look after myself and all the trials will be on my darling Elaine which makes me feel guilty enough but do you know what the worse thing is? Knowing I might not be able to recognise the love of my life and all my children/grandchildren. It's heartbreaking.

Am I frightened? YES very much so, but I am happy in the knowledge that I have raised a loving kind family who will stand by my side till the end. And I am also very lucky to have a large social network of worldwide friends who I will also be very grateful for their friendship and correspondence.

The only advice I could give to anybody who finds themselves in my unfortunate position is try to get help early on, the earlier the better, don't be afraid of telling people, you are ill, not Mad but more importantly smile and laugh at it or it would truly drive you insane!! LOL

How long I have left before I have to give the computer up? Only the "Big Fella" upstairs knows but I would just like to take this opportunity in saying the biggest THANK YOU to everybody and I will cherish all the memories I have of you as long as possible, yours forever your friend,

Norrms (real name Norman)

Biography

My Name is Norrms and i live in the UK. At the age of 42 i was diagnosed with heart failure. At the age of 50 years old i was diagnosed with Early onset Alzheimer's. I a now 53 years old and i intend beating both!!!!

All i have ever wanted to do from the day i was diagnosed was to help as many people as i could understand this awful illness and raise awareness as high as possible to rid it of the Stigma that always seems to follow it around. I lost both my Grandmother and Father to this awful disease so unless they find a cure i know what my future holds, but it has one heck of a fight on its hands.

So please join me on my "Journey" as i fight the the fight of my life and one i intend to win !!!

Best wishes, Norrms, Elaine and family xxxxxxxxx

Continued....Finally, I hope you will join me in making sure that our efforts are not isolated to a single day each year. Indeed, everyday *is* a healthcare decisions day for many families and it *should be* for healthcare providers and other professionals throughout the country. Please continue to use the NHDD website (www.nhdd.org) throughout the year for links to free forms and other resources for the public and professionals. And, if you have great content you could share, send it along, or if you have ideas for what we could do to improve our resources, please let us know.

As always, I thank you all for helping to make National Healthcare Decisions Day a great success..
your decisions matter

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Intern Spotlight

My home is beautiful, sunny Southern CA. I have a BS degree in Bioinformatics from Ramapo College of NJ and currently pursuing a MPH degree in Public Health from Armstrong Atlantic State University. My interest in gerontology began when I took undergraduate courses in Psychology of Aging, and Death and Dying. In addition, I've taken graduate level courses in Gerontology including Geriatric Care Management, Managing Senior Services and Psychology of Aging. I'm interested in health screening among older adults and minority populations, international health, confronting complex health issues, such as improving access to health care and controlling infectious diseases. I'm open to a world of endless possibilities!



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