

# The World of the Fragile Elderly

Rosemary Kohr, RN, PhD, ACNP(cert)  
March 4, 2010

What is it to be old?



What is the world like for the old?



Moving from "old" to "fragile" elderly



Moving from "elderly" to....



*For some reason, these new birds didn't seem as interested in William's bird seed.*

The world of the fragile elderly



## What constitutes this population?

- **Require assistance with daily living**
- Memory loss
- Practical losses:
  - Banking
  - Driving
  - Shopping
  - Cleaning
- Grooming, feeding



## Healthcare needs of the fragile elderly

- **NOT** the same as the “young” old
- Physiological changes
  - Effect of medication may be unpredictable (eg, agitation from sedative)
- Psychosocial changes
  - Behaviour, mood, affect
- Systems slow down



“I know what’s around the corner.

But I don’t really think about death, I’m not afraid of dying except I don’t want to be in pain or struggling. Just not wake up one morning.

I never thought about this until I was 90. Until then, I figured I’d just carry on...”



*“We’re really not afraid of death—at least, I’m not. But I’m afraid of something that might come before. Illness or something, so that you become dependent on someone.*

*Death in itself is just beautiful. I’d like to think that it can be just a natural transition. I didn’t always think so, but I do now. I’d like to prepare myself for that.”*

*“I am happy here at home. I don’t want to go anywhere else. I know where things are. I don’t go out much anymore, but I am fine here in my own home.*

*What would I do if I had to leave all of this behind? When you get sick and go to hospital, you don’t come home again.”*



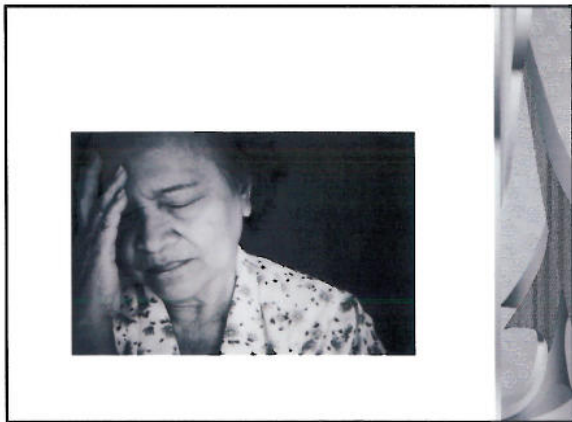






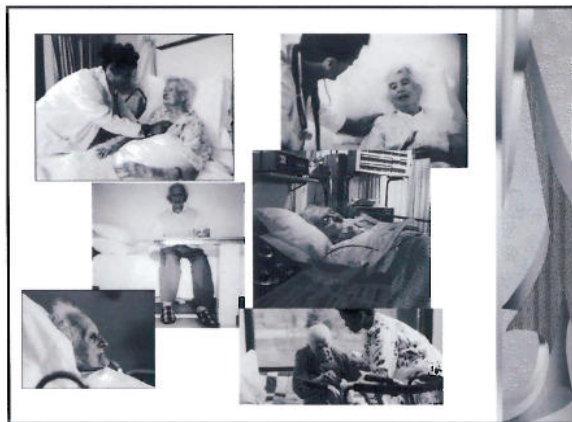

### ISOLATION, FEAR

- Lack of functional role in society
- Culture is focused on the young, on "early aging/retirement"
- Rituals of belonging diminish

In the past, the elders were the guardians of society, the keepers of laws and rituals, initiations, ceremonies, history and oral traditions.



### The healthcare system



DISTANCE OF TECHNOLOGY FROM TOUCH



Staying healthy, staying home



Sensors in apartment



Automatic call reminder to take medications



Daily Living Activities



