There is a growing need for all psychologists to have a basic understanding of the psychology of aging. People 65 years old and older are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population and by 2030 will account for 20% of our nation’s people. As discussed in the *American Psychologist* article, “Aging and Mental Health in the Decade Ahead: What Psychologists Need to Know,” the demand for psychologists with a substantial understanding of later life wellness, cultural, and clinical issues will expand in future years as the older population grows and becomes more diverse (Karel, Gatz, & Smyer, 2012). The recently updated *APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Older Adults* (2013) note that the demand for psychological services for older adults is expected to rise as Baby Boomers become old, and will continue to increase as cohorts of middle-aged and younger individuals—who are receptive to psychological services--move into old age.

Even if you did not begin practice with the intent of working with older adults, clients do age and their needs often change. Additional issues specific to mid and late life may arise. Also, age-related issues may arise in work with younger clients, e.g., those caring for aging parents, grandchildren being raised by grandparents. Finally, even if you do not work directly with older adults or their families or caregivers, we are all aging. Becoming informed of the science of the psychology of aging will prove useful at a personal level—for ourselves and our families.

In terms of psychological practice with older adults, opportunities abound. The number of psychologists who work with older adults is not keeping up with and will not meet the anticipated need. The decade ahead will require an approximate doubling of the current level of psychologists’ time with older adults. The need for services is particularly anticipated to grow in primary care, dementia and family caregiving services, decision making capacity evaluation, and end-of-life care (Karel, Gatz, & Smyer, 2012). However, only 4.2% of respondents of the 2008 APA Survey of Psychology Health Service Providers reported that geropsychology was their current focus and work (APA Center for Workforce Studies, 2010). This workforce shortage is not limited to psychology. The Institute of Medicine report, *The Mental Health and Substance Use Workforce for Older Adults; In Whose Hands* (2012) described the dire need for health providers across professions to address the mental and behavioral health needs of older adults. It found that although the aging population continues to grow in number, diversity, and mental health needs, the geriatric mental health workforce is disconcertingly small and is dwarfed by the pace at which the population is growing.

The APA Office on Aging, and the Committee on Aging and its working groups have developed a wealth of resources that we believe all psychologists will find useful, for the reasons described above, to prepare for the EPPP, and to earn continuing education credit in aging. The main source of information is the Office on Aging website. It has resources and tools including: the APA Family Caregivers Briefcase; reports and fact sheets that provide guidance on how psychologists can work in interprofessional teams across health settings with older adults; resources on multicultural aging; strategies for promoting healthy aging across the lifespan; handbooks on capacity assessment; and professional practice guidelines for the aforementioned psychological practice with older adults and the *Evaluation of Dementia and Age-related Cognitive Change*. One document of note, *What Mental Health Providers Should Know about Working with Older Adults*, summarizes the guidance offered in the *APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Older Adults* and provides links to educational resources for each guideline. There are also consumer education materials and links to other geropsychology websites. Finally, we have developed a fact sheet, *Resources for Psychological Practice with Older Adults and Their...*
Caregivers that provides an overview of these available resources for distribution to your colleagues and students.

The APA Offices on Aging and Continuing Education also offer online continuing education programs including Assessment of Older Adults with Diminished Capacity: A Handbook for Psychologists (4 CE credits), Blueprint for Change: Achieving Integrated Health for an Aging Population (2 CE credits), and What Psychologists Should Know About Working with Older Adults (7 CE credits). APA Publications offers twelve Psychotherapy Training Videos specific to older adult practice issues (search by subject: aging). If you would like ongoing information about psychology and aging issues, you can also subscribe online to our free, semi-annual e-newsletter, APA Aging Issues Newsletter.

For practitioners who wish to specialize in professional geropsychology, more detailed guidance regarding the “Pikes Peak Attitudes, Knowledge and Skills Competencies for Practice in Professional Geropsychology (Knight, Karel, Hinrichsen, Qualls & Duffy, 2009) and the corresponding competencies assessment tool is available on The Council of Professional Geropsychology Training Programs website.

For more information about aging at APA, please contact me at: ddigilio@apa.org or 202-336-6135. To request additional copies of the resources fact sheet, please contact Martha Randolph at mrandolph@apa.org.

References