New Online Course for Primary Care Physicians and Other Clinicians on Assessment of Capacity of Older Adults

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Rush University Medical Center and the American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging have released an interactive educational curriculum on assessing the capacity of older adults, funded by The Retirement Research Foundation.

The course is aimed at physicians with a variety of backgrounds, but is suitable and valuable for all health care clinicians and students.

Why the Course is Needed

The 21st century is bringing about vast changes in the demographics of the United States. Notably, the population is aging at a rapid rate, incidence of chronic illness and dementia is increasing, the disability population is aging, the nature of medical choices is changing due to evolving medical technology, and health care delivery systems are becoming increasingly complex.

These trends bring health care clinicians up starkly against a growing challenge to better understand the process of capacity assessment and their role.

Course Content and Components

The curriculum includes six modules:

- The importance of evaluating patients’ capacities;
- Key principles and practices; the evaluation process and content;
- Specific capacities and situations;
- When to conduct an evaluation yourself and when to refer; and
- Working with courts in guardianship proceedings.

The course features videos to illustrate salient points, and has a pocket-sized card for quick reference. The curriculum is downloadable, and has a downloadable glossary and resource page. For more information, see www.rush.edu/decisionalcapacity.

Taking the Course

The curriculum is expected to take no longer than four hours to complete, and need not be completed in one sitting. Viewers will be able to log off and then log back on. There is a brief post-test (about five questions) at the end of each module. The course will be open starting March 18, 2013.

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