

Home Assessment

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Gerontology 482/582
Health Assessment of the Aging Client
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The resident Mr. Le lives in is located in Garden Grove, California conveniently situated in the suburbs of sunny side Southern California. The home he currently resides in with his brother was purchased in roughly the year 1982 – 1983 for approximately half the cost its worth today with very few, if any major remodeling changes. Some obvious noticeable minor adjustments to the interior of the home were made approximately in the year 2000 with new wood flooring replacing tile, new furniture to match, and a new kitchen marble counter with new paint and cabinetry. All together I would say, the home residence is a single family house connected with a front lawn, back yard, 2-car garage and a huge drive way sitting on flat land (foundation of the home, surface, and turf were not built on an incline). Even though the name of the street is named hill, I like to reference my Dad as “King of the Hill.” No pun intended.

For as long as I can remember, my dad has built, repaired, fixed, changed, and invested so much into his home since he bought it; he loves it. Leaving his own home in the motherland of Vietnam was a tough pill to swallow and he tells me with every waking sun that he misses Vietnam terribly, but having come to America was the single greatest decision of his personal and professional career. Everyone knows the story about the fall of Saigon in 1975, but not many people talk about how difficult it is to age in place under today’s circumstances, or finding refuge in the later stages of life’s course for minority ethnic senior citizens like Mr. Le. At least not to my knowledge, before doing assessment we both came to the realization that the true saying goes, “it’s best to be safer than sorry,” and with this home assessment I hope Mr. Le will take into consideration the savings he will have from doing additional safety & security modifications if applicable.

In my judgments, Mr. Le has come to the realization that this home assessment will further benefit him in terms of a safer place to function, a more user friendly home, and above all

else a more prepared home for aging changes. Eventually, there will be no corner overlooked, no shadow too wide, or no trouble too little to speak of. I hope this simple easy to use assessment tool will bring peace of mind.

The home assessment of an older adult over the age of 65 will be conducted by me in Mr. Le's home. To shed some light on the person, Mr. Le embodies a combination of characteristics and personalities that I noticed that adds to his persona. To me personally, he is a person with charisma, charm, and possessing a laid back sense of humor. Moreover, he is also retired, single, a father of 4, a grandfather of 3, a brother with 4 younger brothers and sisters, a 20 year retired mechanic for ARCO and other businesses including his own, a 40 year retired Vietnam War Veteran, a survivor, and a man of God; especially on weekends.

Society has a funny way of depicting what it means to be cool. Is aging in today's society cool? Is getting old, frail, and adopting simple meaningful age related behavior cool? With the home safety self assessment tool (HSSAT), I will uncover hidden strengths and discover hidden weaknesses in Mr. Le's surroundings. In addition, I will assess safety and fall prevention measures or parameters best suited for someone matching his criteria so that anyone can use this as a framework to assess somebody in their own family whenever possible.

Mr. Le is just barely above the age of 65, having only been retired for 2 years now. Today, is as good of a time as any to start determining some "cool" home modifications in my opinion, because he still functions at a high level compared to some retired people his age, but he will soon experience deterioration, so this awareness assessment will be beneficial hereon in and possibly re-assessing 6 months and 12 months down the line will be necessary. Coming from me, it will be a lot easier to give Mr. Le some simple recommendations he can make to his regular daily habits and routines. To address some clear weaknesses furthermore, there are some

dysfunctions in areas of the home, like the entrance to the front door and front yard, the entrance to the back/side door, some parts of the living area, and especially the bathroom this assessment determined and deemed hazardous. As far as the resident's functioning in his home, Mr. Le is able to move with ease around the rest of the house because he is not confined to a wheelchair or requires frequent walking assistance. Although he is not what society would classify as old-old, or old-frail, Mr. Le does have his physical limitations which may hinder what he can and cannot do with ease anymore compared to someone like myself. On the flip side of that coin, Mr. Le does have many strengths being that he does still drive his own personal vehicle, he does not walk or move with assistive devices or requires any additional personal care with independent activities of daily living or activities of daily living skills. He still has a working, but weak vision and he has aidless (hearing) ears which will likely replace his hearing substantially as he gets older and weaker.

The overall home assessment addresses a number of hazardous situations of the home. Mr. Le's place of residence was assessed in mostly all areas of daily living, not only locations that were used the most per se. Invented by the University of Buffalo School of Public Health and Health Professions, the HSSAT tool (version 4.0) is used via checklist to assess one's home. From there website via online publication they stated, "In the U.S. one in every three seniors over the age of 65 years fall each year. And falls are the leading cause of injury, disability, nursing home placement, and death." There doesn't take much for someone to realize how easy it is to fall victim, but to be unprepared is just as bad. I told him, the punishment is often greater than the crime but in this situation it is always a lose-lose outcome. In his home, I was able to use a checklist to assess areas of the front entrance/front door, entrance in the back/side door, hallway or foyer, living rooms, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, staircase, laundry room/basement.

Each room I would then tally which spot I thought needs improvement or showed signs of distress, wear and tear, or unequipped with home modifications. I would then come up with a grand total for each hazard I observed and then giving that a one point. At the end of the assessment of the living spaces I came up with a grand total of 31, which in essence translates to 31/62 problems I thought needed modifications as soon as possible. Of those 31 problems I found that the bathroom, front entrance and front yard, and also the entrance to back/side door could use some easy home modifications, but I will suggest home modifications for all areas of the home deemed hazardous living conditions.

Solutions for the problems in entrance to front door and front yard:

1. Lack of railings or unstable railing

Add at least one railing, ideally one on each wall. Have unstable railing stabilized.

2. Unmarked or raised threshold

Mark ends of steps or thresholds with contrasting tape or paint color to increase awareness of changes in height.

3. Lack of lighting at night

Add an outdoor light fixture if not present. Add a sensor light that automatically turns on and off.

4. Lack of a ramp for a wheelchair

Have a remodeler or home contractor construct a ramp that will allow wheelchair access in and out of the home.

5. Unsafe pavement (uneven or cracked)

Have uneven pavement repaired. Avoid areas if possible. Contact local government for repair if it is a sidewalk or driveway end.

6. Lack of outdoor grab bar.

Add an outdoor grab bar next to the door.

Solutions for the problems entrance to back/side door:

Pretty much all the same as the front door and front yard entrance.

Solutions for the problems in Hallway:

1. Unsafe flooring (slippery, uneven carpeting, etc.)

Make sure floor surfaces are dry. If you have a carpet, make sure that the patterns are not too busy. Have carpet stretched or removed to eliminate wrinkles or bumps. Add a carpet runner to slippery hallways or foyers and secure to the floor.

2. Dark or poor lighting

Increase wattage to allowable limits in the lights. Add additional overhead or wall lighting.

Solutions for the problems in Living Room:

1. Presence of a throw or scatter rug

Remove a scatter rug or use a double sided rug tape or a rug pad to secure the rug to the floor.

2. Poor Lighting

Increase wattage to allowable limits in lamps/lights. Add additional lamps or wall/overhead lights.

3. Presence of unstable furniture (chair, table, etc.)

Place a block under the shorter leg. If the chair or table is broken, have it repaired or replaced.

4. Difficult to access light switches

Add “clapper” light switch control to lamps. There are other remote control switching options for operating the lights. Rearrange furnishings to allow quick access to wall switch or lamps.

Solutions for the problems in Kitchen

1. Cabinet too high or too low.

Move items to the shelves closest to the counter. Add hooks to the wall for pots and pans you use frequently.

2. Using a stool to a chair to reach things.

Move items to to lower shelves. Replace the stool with a sturdy step ladder.

3. Presence of slippery floor

Do not walk on wet floor. Wear comfortable and fit shoes or socks with a non skid sole. Change flooring surface to one that is less slippery.

Solutions for the problems in Bedroom

1. Lack of device to help get in and out of bed.

Purchase a half bedrail or a bed crane that can slide between mattress and box spring.

Solutions for the problems in Bathroom.

1. Presence of unsafe bath rugs.

Use a bath rug with non skid bottom

2. Lack of grab bars in the tub

Add a bath grab bar on the wall or a clamp-on grab bar to the tub.

3. Lack of grab bars in the shower

Add a bath grab bar on the wall near the shower and on the wall where the bath faucets are.

4. Lack of grab bars near toilet

Add a grab bar on the wall next to the toilet or toilet safety grab bars that attach at the toilet seat screws.

5. Slippery tub (lack of bath mat, etc.)

Add a rubber bath mat or adhesive non-skid decals to the bottom of the tub.

6. Claw foot/t or other type of tub that is too high to get into easily

Add a tub transfer bench to slide into the tub area or replace with a lower tub.

7. Lack of bath chair in the shower area

Add a chair along with grab bars to the tub or shower area. A tub transfer bench is helpful if you have difficulty stepping into the tub area, because you can sit and slide over into the tub area.

8. Solutions to the problems in staircases.

None because there is no basement and the attic staircases do not exist either.

9. Solutions to the problems in laundry room

1. Clutter.

Eliminate clutter on floors by removing and/or organizing items in areas near the stairs.

2. Slippery steps without tread or carpet or luminous light

Add adhesive stair treads or carpet runner.

Resources

1. Retrieved from <http://agingresearch.buffalo.edu/hssat/assessment.pdf>, on March 8, 2015.
2. Retrieved from <http://agingresearch.buffalo.edu/hssat/>, on March 8, 2015.
3. Kaiser Wellness Coaching by Phone 1-866-862-4295

Nearest Kaiser Urgent Care in Garden Grove:

12100 Euclid St.,

Garden Grove, CA 92840

4. Garden Grove Public Works (i.e. sidewalk and drive way assistance)
Retrieved from <http://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/pw/faq>, on March 10, 2015.