

# **CARING FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE**

---

Understanding and Practical Help  
Third Edition

Susan Hooker

ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:  
AGING



ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:  
AGING

---

Volume 26

CARING FOR  
ELDERLY PEOPLE

---



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

CARING FOR  
ELDERLY PEOPLE

Understanding and Practical Help

Third Edition

SUSAN HOOKER

First published in 1976 by Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd  
Second edition 1981, Third edition published in 1990

This edition first published in 2024  
by Routledge  
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge  
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 1976, 1981, 1990 Susan Hooker  
© Foreword John Hughes

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-032-67433-9 (Set)  
ISBN: 978-1-032-73143-8 (Volume 26) (hbk)  
ISBN: 978-1-032-73149-0 (Volume 26) (pbk)  
ISBN: 978-1-003-42696-7 (Volume 26) (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003426967

**Publisher's Note**

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original copies may be apparent.

**Disclaimer**

The publisher has made every effort to trace copyright holders and would welcome correspondence from those they have been unable to trace.

# CARING FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE

First published in 1976, *Caring for Elderly People* rapidly established itself as a standard guide for anyone dealing on a day-to-day basis with the elderly. This up-dated and revised edition contains information on financial help and services and on the new technology available.

The book concerns itself primarily with elderly people who are either living alone or with relatives. In addition to setting out the practical steps to be taken in the treatment of illness (such as Parkinson's disease, stroke, bronchitis, etc.), the author explains why elderly people cannot cope with apparently simple operations, and why they act in a certain way. An extensive list of aids and gadgets, ancillary and community services, is designed to provide supportive advice to relatives and professionals alike, and to encourage the maximum possible self-reliance in the elderly.

Susan Hooker, MCSP, qualified as a physiotherapist from St Thomas's Hospital in 1966. She has worked in several hospitals, including the geriatric unit of Bronglais Hospital, Aberystwyth, and the Lampeter Health Clinic. She is at present in private practice as a physiotherapist and acupuncturist.

The Foreword is by Dr John Hughes, a family doctor who has experienced, at first hand, the value of physiotherapy in the rehabilitation of patients who have suffered such disabilities as fractures and strokes.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# Caring for elderly people

Understanding and  
practical help

Susan Hooker, MCSP

Foreword by John Hughes

**THIRD EDITION**



Tavistock/Routledge  
London and New York



First published in 1976 by Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd  
Reprinted in paperback in 1978  
Second edition 1981

Third edition published 1990  
by Routledge  
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada  
by Routledge  
a division of Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc.  
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

© Susan Hooker 1976, 1981, 1990  
© Foreword John Hughes

Typeset by Columns of Reading  
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Mackays of Chatham

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

Hooker, Susan

Caring for elderly people. – 3rd ed

1. Great Britain. Old persons. Home care

I. Title

649.8

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Hooker, Susan.

Caring for elderly people : understanding and practical help / Susan Hooker; foreword by John Hughes. – 3rd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Aged – Health and hygiene. 2. Aged – Rehabilitation.

3. Exercise therapy. 4. Self-help devices for the disabled.

I. Title.

RC952.5.H66 1990

649.8–dc20

ISBN 0-415-04832-X

89-70157  
CIP

**For my parents Charles and Winifrid Hope Gill**



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	xiii
by Dr John Hughes, MB, BCh, DRCOG	
<b>Preface and acknowledgements</b>	xiv
<b>Preface to the second edition</b>	xvi
<b>Preface to the third edition</b>	xviii
<b>1 Normal and abnormal changes</b>	1
Signs of impending illness	1
Indications of future disability	1
Normal mental changes	2
Adjustment: learning and experience	3
Memory	3
Personality changes and social behaviour	4
Deafness	4
Loss of sight	5
Care and understanding by relatives	6
Attitudes of relatives	8
<b>2 Arthritis</b>	9
Osteo-arthritis	9
Causes and symptoms	9
Pain	9
Muscle weakness	11
Deformity	12
Treatment	13
Rheumatoid arthritis	14
Causes and symptoms	14
Outcome	15
Treatment	16
Returning home	17
Arthritis in the shoulder	18
Sciatica	18
Causes	18
Treatment	20
Arthritis in the neck (cervical spondylosis)	21
Symptoms	21
Treatment	21

viii Contents

<b>3</b>	<b>Stroke</b>	23
	Causes and symptoms	23
	Onset	23
	Mental attitude	24
	Speech defects	25
	Disturbances of sensation and circulation	27
	Movement and rehabilitation	28
	Painful shoulder	29
	Movements for the arm and leg	30
	Shoulder	30
	Elbow	30
	Wrist	30
	Hand	30
	Hip	30
	Knee	31
	Ankle	31
	Foot	31
	Spasticity	31
	Rehabilitation	33
	The face	34
	Getting out of bed	34
	Sitting down	36
	The trunk	37
	Standing up	38
	Walking	38
	Dressing	41
	Normal living	41
<b>4</b>	<b>Fractures</b>	45
	Fractured 'hip'	45
	First aid	45
	Treatment	45
	Physiotherapy	46
	Back to normal	48
	Fracture of the upper arm	48
	Fracture of the wrist	49
<b>5</b>	<b>Hip replacement</b>	51
	Indications	51
	Types of joint	51
	Pre-operative treatment	51
	Post-operative treatment	52
	Independence	54
<b>6</b>	<b>Amputation</b>	55
	Indications	55

## ix Contents

Levels of amputation	55
Below-knee amputation	55
Through-knee amputation	55
Above-knee amputation	55
Other levels	56
Psychological effects	56
Preparation	56
Pre-operative treatment	57
Post-operative treatment	59
Walking	59
Going home	60
Bandaging	60
Prosthesis	60
The stump	61
Phantom limb	61
Getting about	61
<b>7 Parkinson's Disease</b>	<b>63</b>
Symptoms	63
Treatment	63
Relief of pain	63
Mobility and posture	64
<b>8 Multiple Sclerosis</b>	<b>69</b>
Cause	69
Signs and symptoms	69
Treatment	70
Home activities to maintain independence	71
Pain	73
Diet	73
<b>9 Falls and loss of balance</b>	<b>75</b>
Causes of falls	75
'Drop attacks'	76
Balance and posture	76
How to get up or attract attention	78
<b>10 Bronchitis</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>11 Care of the feet and legs</b>	<b>83</b>
Foot strain	83
Hammer toes and bunions	83
Calluses, ingrowing toenails and sore heels	83
Cramp	84
Varicose veins	84
Swollen legs and bandaging	85

x Contents

	Leg ulcers	86
<b>12</b>	<b>Obesity and diet</b>	89
	Obesity	89
	Diet	89
	Wholefoods	92
	Dehydration	93
	Diabetes	93
<b>13</b>	<b>Incontinence and constipation</b>	95
	Incontinence of urine	95
	Management	98
	Bed clothes	98
	Dress	98
	Incontinence of faeces	99
	Constipation	99
<b>14</b>	<b>Hypothermia</b>	101
	Action	101
	Prevention	102
<b>15</b>	<b>Care of the elderly person in bed</b>	103
	The dangers	103
	Problems of the bedfast	104
	Management	105
	Turning	105
	Lifting up the bed	106
	Bed changing and washing	106
	Positioning	107
	Getting up again	108
	Sitting in a chair	109
	Bed sores	110
	Formation	110
	Prevention	111
	Treatment	112
	Attendance allowance	112
<b>16</b>	<b>Changes in behaviour</b>	113
<b>17</b>	<b>Daily activities</b>	119
	Sitting down in a chair	119
	Stiff hips	119
	Sitting in a chair	120
	Stroke	120
	Slipping forward	120
	Confusion	120

xi Contents

Standing up from a chair	121
Stroke	121
Stiff hips	121
Getting into bed	121
Stroke	122
Moving up the bed	122
Stroke	123
Painful shoulders	123
Getting out of bed	123
Dressing	124
Getting up off the floor	124
Walking up and down stairs	124
Helping the elderly to walk	125
Lifting	125
The wheelchair	127
Use	127
General points	128
<b>18 Exercises</b>	<b>131</b>
Introduction	131
Exercises	132
Feet and ankles	132
Knees	132
Hips	133
Stump	134
Shoulders	134
Wrists and hands	135
Arm strengthening	135
Neck	135
Back	136
Pelvic floor muscles	136
Breathing	136
Keeping fit	137
Hands	137
Shoulders	137
Neck	137
Upper back	137
Hips	137
Knees	137
Breathing exercises	137
Pelvic floor exercises for control of incontinence	137
<b>19 Outside services</b>	<b>139</b>
Introduction	139
Services	139
Social Services	139



xii Contents

	Area Health Authority	139
	Red Cross	139
	Age Concern	140
	WRVS	140
	Help at local level	140
	Explanation of services	140
	Financial help	143
	Pensions and Social Security	143
	Other allowances	144
<b>20</b>	<b>Aids and gadgets</b>	<b>145</b>
	Introduction	145
	Getting about, and aids to independence	146
	General ideas	149
	Eating aids	154
	Kitchen aids	156
	Toilet aids	160
	Dressing aids	162
	Washing and bathing aids	166
	Aids for the bedfast	169
	Incontinence aids	171
	Pastimes	172
	Safety aids	174
	Common sense and precautions	176
	Manufacturers' addresses	177
	<b>Glossary</b>	<b>179</b>
	<b>Some useful addresses, books and booklets</b>	<b>181</b>
	<b>Index</b>	<b>185</b>

# Foreword

It matters not how long we live – but how.

P. J. Bailey  
1816–1902

There is no doubt that men and women today are living to a ripe old age. This can be attributed to better environmental conditions, better food and adequate control of the ordinary infections of mankind. The longer we live the more prone we are to suffer from the effects of degeneration of the arteries (strokes), from malfunction of our joints (rheumatism) and from accidents. Very soon we join that dreaded category of 'chronic sick'. Despite the fact that our disability may be chronic, we need not be sick. That is the message of this book. It emphasises the need for, and illustrates the way to, care for the elderly so that they can live a useful and happy life despite a physical or mental handicap.

This excellent book, written by a practising physiotherapist, sets out to inform – to communicate – and this is terribly important in this computer age. It explains the nature of the illness or disability; it deals with the management of the elderly; it gives information about the ancillary and community services that are available to help and inform; and deals in a practical and sympathetic way with the many problems that confront relatives caring for the disabled. It is essential reading for those who look after the elderly and old people themselves will find it interesting and informative.

As a family doctor I can also commend it with confidence to all doctors and nurses. The book is a mine of information and I congratulate the author on her enterprise, her enthusiasm, and her ability to express clearly a message of hope for the elderly and wise counsel for the relatives. A great deal can be done by and for the handicapped. It is not enough to do good; one must do it the right way. That is what this book is all about.

Aberystwyth

John H. Hughes

# Preface and acknowledgements

I think of the elderly as those who find everyday tasks of normal living difficult because various parts of their bodies are becoming less efficient. There is no fixed rate at which people age; different parts of the body wear out at different rates, so the number of years reached is immaterial. Sections of this book may apply to some people in their late sixties and yet the same sections be irrelevant to some in their eighties.

I am concerned here mainly with the elderly who are living independently in their own homes, or with relatives. My aims are to help people understand and cope with the changes that take place, physically and mentally, as one grows older. I hope it will also help elderly people to understand what others are trying to do to enable them to live as fully as possible.

It is only possible to help people in a practical way by understanding *why* they act in a certain way, or *why* they cannot do something that appears quite simple. For this reason I have explained the causes and symptoms of common ailments that are found in old people, and if the basic reason for strange behaviour is kept in mind the enormous amount of help that is offered by relatives will be channelled in a positive direction.

Readers should not confine themselves to the chapter on the disability that primarily concerns them, as they should find suggestions throughout the book which may apply just as readily to them.

I hope this book will also be of use to students of nursing and physiotherapy, and auxiliary nurses who work with the elderly, as well as social workers and other domiciliary helpers. If the elderly are in hospital the role of the relative is taken on by the staff who meet the same physical problems as the relatives, and psychological problems too, except that those arising from family ties are absent. Elderly patients are often completely dependent on the staff who can either make their stay miserable, in which case they react by being obstinate and difficult, or very happy when co-operation from both sides works towards successful rehabilitation and the return home.

I wish to thank Dr John Hughes, MB, BCh, DRCOG for writing the foreword to this book; and my husband for his help and encouragement.

I also wish to thank Dr Gareth Hughes, MB, MRCP, whose running of the Geriatric Unit at Aberystwyth has enabled me to see the results that can be achieved in the rehabilitation of the elderly, and my senior colleague Mrs Laura Jones, MCSP,

xv Preface and acknowledgements

who has taught me almost all I know about the physiotherapy treatment of old people; her patience, skill and psychological insight have been the basis of this book.

S.H.

# Preface to the second edition

This second edition of *Caring for Elderly People* has given me the opportunity of including several extra chapters on important conditions. Multiple Sclerosis, for example, is a condition that creates a lot of problems of manoeuvrability. Sufferers have to overcome such difficulties as incontinence, muscle weakness or spasm and experience great dependence on others as it progresses.

Amputations are comparatively common due to an increase in diseases of the heart and arteries and call for great psychological adjustments. In fact, most elderly people do very well, and surprise themselves in their ability to get about – unless, of course, some other condition such as a stroke or arthritis complicates it. This leads me on to the subject of ‘hip replacement’ operations. To many people it is like a miracle, and, indeed, the majority of people progress excellently, but, as I stress in the chapter concerned, the amount of work put in beforehand to strengthen muscles and keep the joint as free as possible is of paramount importance if the end result is to be the success it can be.

In the chapter on falls and loss of balance I have inserted a piece on ‘drop attacks’. These are strange phenomena that are not understood and cause people literally to drop to the ground without any warning, being unable to get up again without assistance. I hope to take some of the fear out of that situation by at least explaining what to do about it even if the cause is unknown.

Hypothermia is much in the news these days and is a real problem. One may wonder how people allow themselves to get so cold, but most elderly people literally do not feel how cold they really are due to inefficiencies of the body thermostat in their brains. They need to be aware of this so that they can make a conscious effort to wear enough clothes and to keep their houses adequately warm.

I have expanded the chapter on diet a little to explain the advantages of eating unrefined and natural food. Most people feel a lot better when eating wholemeal bread, brown sugar and rice and other unadulterated food. Many minor complaints can be averted by doing so, particularly constipation. The chapter on stroke has been slightly altered to include more recent ways of managing problems of mobilisation and weakness.

After a lot of thought I decided to leave out the complicated subjects of ‘heart disease’ and ‘anaemia’. They are both terms that cover numerous conditions which are impossible to

generalise about. Any treatment needs to be tailor-made for the individual, and neither condition is suitable for unsupervised home management.

Since I wrote the first edition, my own father had a long period of illness and died at the age of eighty-one; this has given me a much closer and more personal view of the problems involved. My experience previously had been confined to contact with other people's elderly and ill relatives. One of the most important things I learned was the absolute necessity of allowing him to go on being *himself*; a force to be reckoned with, with opinions and feelings. Many people who are ill or disabled have had all decisions made for them, and their lives tend to be run by someone else's ideas of what their needs are, whether it is a simple, but important, matter of how the pillows are arranged to whether they stay in their own home or not. I think people should have the right to decide on how their lives continue to be run even if others do not consider that decision suitable or 'good' for them. One can only *offer* alternatives and advice, they should not be forced upon those who do not want them, and are in no position to oppose them. The welfare of people who are getting older and less active is their own responsibility as well as that of friends and relatives, and their wishes should be respected whenever possible. However, physical help and moral support are most important, and a balance needs to be maintained between these factors to enable life to be as fulfilling as possible.

Therefore, I hope this second edition will be read by relatives *and* the people they are trying to help so that they work together to create a situation that is satisfactory to both.

**Author's note** It may be noticed that the masculine gender has been used throughout the book which has been commented on from time to time. The reason for this is to enable the illustrations to show clearly points explained in the text, without the position of the limbs being masked by a skirt. It is not to presume that all elderly people are male. The 'helpers' are depicted as women only to distinguish them from the 'patient'.