Professionals working with older adults need to be “in the know” about aging. In order to base our interactions with older adults on a foundation of knowledge, we need to know about aging, and be able to differentiate between the truths and the many myths and stereotypes.

Test your knowledge about older people and the aging process.

Complete the following true or false statements. *(Answers on next page)*

1. As people grow older, their intelligence declines significantly. T or F
2. Personality changes with age. T or F
3. Memory loss is a normal part of aging. T or F
4. Clinical depression occurs more frequently in older than younger people. T or F
5. Most old people lose interest in and capacity for sexual relations. T or F
6. Constipation increases in more people as they grow older. T or F
7. Retirement is often detrimental to health – i.e., people frequently become ill or die soon after retirement. T or F
8. The modern family no longer takes care of its older people. T or F
9. Abuse of older people is not a significant problem in the U.S. T or F
10. Older adults have the highest suicide rate of any age group.¹ T or F

Possible consequences if or when older people and professionals confuse pathologic conditions with normal aging:

- We are likely to overlook treatable conditions.
- This confusion could significantly harm older by people by not addressing changes that are actual signs of illness ²
It is important that professionals working in health care and social services have adequate education on gerontology (aging and its effects). Professionals have a responsibility to be knowledgeable about the differences between age-related changes and pathology so that the focus is on treatable conditions.

Research Study on Age Excuses
Many people make “age excuses” which basically means attribute problems such as forgetfulness to old age rather than illness and potentially treatable conditions. A 2002 study by Ryan and colleagues explored “age excuses” and found they often undermine the self-perception of older people and threaten self-esteem if the older person believed the excuse.³

My picks for the month of December are:

✓ **Website:** http://cas.umkc.edu/cas/AgingFactsQuiz.htm. Center on Aging Studies at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Here you will find answers to the questions listed on the first page along with 40 additional questions and answers.

**By the way, the answers to Aging Quiz are all False, except 3 and 10.**

✓ **Website:** http://www.aoa.gov/index.asp. The Administration on Aging (AoA) web site is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of a wide variety of topics, programs and services related to aging. Whether you are an older individual, caregiver, professional, community service provider, researcher, or a student, you will find valuable information provided in a user-friendly way.

**Resources:**
1. Excerpts from quiz developed by the Center on Aging Studies at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. http://cas.umkc.edu/cas/

GERO GEMS is a publication of the Center for Aging with Dignity (CFAWD). The CFAWD is devoted to keeping people “SAFE After 60” by advocating for, advancing and developing best-practice programs on the safety and mistreatment of older adults. GERO GEMS is written by Evelyn Fitzwater and edited by Charles Puchta. Copyright © 2006 University of Cincinnati.