



# The Aging Patient

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the last century, the number of Americans over the age of 65 years increased from 3 million to nearly 45 million in 2013, accounting for 13% of the population. During the same period the population over age 85 grew rapidly, expanding from 100,000 in 1900 to nearly 6 million in 2013. By 2030, the number of adults over age 65 will likely reach 72 million, or just over 20% of the total population. Ten million of those people will be over age 85 (Fig. 124-1). A report from the National Institute on Aging and the U.S. State Department points out that this phenomenon is not isolated to the United States. Around the globe, the percentage of the population over 65 years of age will increase by 25% to 50% over the next 25 years and by 140% in developing nations.

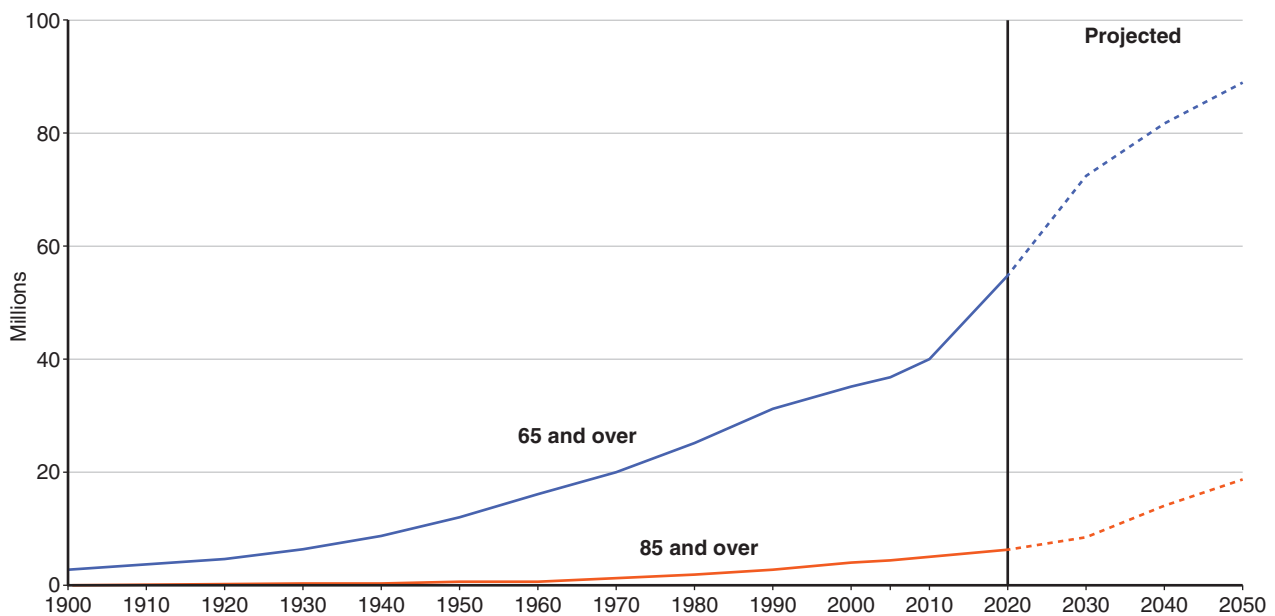
The aging of the world's population compels virtually all health care providers to gain competency in geriatrics, the clinical science of assessment, prevention, and treatment of illness in older adults. A basic grasp of geriatrics requires understanding at epidemiologic, biologic, and clinical levels. The provider must appreciate the impact of aging on presentation of and

predisposition to certain conditions, identification of goals of care, and selection of treatment strategies. Moreover, care of older adults demands a multifaceted approach, accounting for individual, family, and community resources for caregiving. Finally, the practice of geriatrics requires an appreciation for systems of care that include interprofessional teams working in a variety of settings ranging from home to hospital to long-term care. This chapter will provide an introduction to geriatrics and the essentials of caring for older adults.

## EPIDEMIOLOGY OF AGING

Most experts believe that the rapid growth of the population of older adults reflects the many health care successes of the twentieth century. Fries, in his landmark paper, attributes the extension of the human lifespan to “the elimination of premature death, particularly neonatal mortality.” Improvements in other aspects of public health, including adequate nutrition and housing, safe drinking water, immunizations, and antibiotics, have led to lower rates of mortality throughout childhood and early adulthood, affording an opportunity for more people to

Population Age 65 and Over and Age 85 and Over, Selected Years 1900–2010 and Projected 2010–2050



Reference population: These data refer to the resident population.

**FIGURE 124-1** Number of people aged 65 years and older, by age group, for selected years 1900 to 2010 and projected years 2010 to 2050. (From Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics: Older Americans 2012: key indicators of well-being. Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, Washington, D.C., 2012, U.S. Government Printing Office.)