CARING FOR PEOPLE WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE: A TRAINING MANUAL FOR DIRECT CARE PROVIDERS
By Gayle Andresen
Baltimore, MD: Health Profession Press, 1995, 189 pages
Reviewed by Stephen M. Marson, Pembroke State University

Most of my many readings on the subject of Alzheimer’s disease have had a theme of hopelessness. Andresen’s monograph is different. She writes in an energetic and optimistic manner—which is quite unusual for this type of work.

Andresen specifically notes that she writes for an audience of nurses, nursing assistants, social workers, dietitians, housekeepers, activities directors, and family members who are caring for a person with Alzheimer’s disease. I think Andresen’s list can include many others. This book provides not only an understanding of the disease, but also the tools to explain the disease coherently to a group. Listed at the beginning of each chapter are learning objectives that correspond to the sections within the chapter. At the end of each chapter is a quiz and hints to assist the instructor.

This is a clear, concise, and well-organized book. It includes eight chapters and four appendices. I was immediately attracted to this book when I read the chapter titles because of their usefulness for helping caregivers:

   Instructor Guide
   Overview of Dementia
Communication
Managing Personal Care and Nutrition
Managing Difficult Behaviors
Medications for Depression and Behavior Amelioration
Supporting the Caregivers—Families and Staff
Special Care Units

The appendices include:
- Assessment Tools
- Transparencies
- Suggested Readings
- Answers to Unit Quizzes

Although all the chapters are excellently written, I was particularly impressed with "Managing Difficult Behaviors." Andresen writes with a rare clarity and candor. Her reassuring style will be a wonderful asset to educators and staff who must explain behavior changes to family and staff. An unintended consequence of this chapter is the aid it will offer in patient care conferences.

Except for one major problem, the appendices are great. I was very impressed with the collection of transparencies. They will be a great asset to any presentation on Alzheimer's disease. The problem? The Assessment Tools appendix presents six measurement tools that would clearly assist in providing care for the Alzheimer victim, but there is no mention of copyright obligations! If I were a nursing home administrator and purchased the book, I might run off 100 copies of one of the instruments. As an academic, I am aware that such action is not advisable, but a nursing home administrator or a director of nursing would probably not have such knowledge. The author and publisher made a serious error in not mentioning copyright limitations.

In summary, I strongly recommend this monograph to any library that serves programs in gerontology, nursing, nursing home administration, nursing assistance, and social work. In addition, families who have a member stricken with Alzheimer's will feel better after reading it. Andresen and the publisher must be applauded for this excellent work.