



**SCHOOL OF  
MEDICINE**

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**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY  
GRADUATE PROGRAM**

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**CARLA WILHITE, OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA**

# Aging and Agriculture:

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HEALTH, HAZARDS, AND ISSUES OF NORTH AMERICAN  
ELDERLY FARMERS

# Learning Objectives

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Participants will be:

1. Familiar with health issues affecting elderly farm producers.
2. Familiar with major hazards working on farms or ranches.
3. Able to identify resources available to ameliorate health issues and hazards.

# Agriculture is one of the most dangerous industries in North America

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- ❑ One of the highest occupational fatality rates in U.S. and Canada (U.S. Census, Statistics Canada)
- ❑ 80% of farms are small family operations
- ❑ Average age of a farmer is now approaching 60 years of age
- ❑ Farmers over age 54 are at higher risk for farm fatality injuries and non-fatal permanent injuries (Myers, Layne, & March, 2007)

# Major hazards in the farm industry involve tractors, farm machinery, livestock, and falls

[https://www.osha.gov/dsg/topics/agriculturaloperations/hazards\\_controls.html](https://www.osha.gov/dsg/topics/agriculturaloperations/hazards_controls.html)



# Positive aging: Solutions to increase older farmer safety include assistive technology, environmental modifications, and aging in place strategies

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# Positive aging: Older farmers may want to retire from farming and would benefit from transition planning, long term care strategies, and end of life decision-making (Magilvy & Congdon, 2001)

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# Free resources for older farmers

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- ❖ National AgrAbility Project

- ❖ <http://www.agrability.org/>

- ❖ Driving Resources: Car Fit

- ❖ <https://www.car-fit.org/#:~:text=CarFit%20is%20an%20educational%20program,their%20mobility%20in%20the%20community.>

- ❖ Housing repair and retrofit (USDA)

- ❖ <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/single-family-housing-repair-loans-grants>

- ❖ Transition Planning: UM-Extension

- ❖ <https://extension.umn.edu/courses-and-events/farm-transition-and-estate-planning>

- ❖ Advance Care Planning: National Institute on Aging

- ❖ <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/getting-your-affairs-order>



# References

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Magilvy, J. K. & Congdon, J. G. (2001). The Crisis Nature of Health Care Transitions for Rural Older Adults. *Public Health Nursing* Vol. 17 No. 5, pp. 336–345

Myers, J. R., Layne, L.A., & March, S. M. (2007). Injuries and fatalities to U.S. farmers and farm workers 55 years and older. *Proceeds of the The Aging Farm Community: Using Current Health and Safety Status to Map Future Action*, March 6-8, 2007, Indianapolis, Indiana. Urbana, IL: Agricultural Safety & Health Network (ASHNET), 2007 Mar; :1-26