

1. Please submit a brief bio. This is for a website, so please limit it to a couple paragraphs highlighting your work in gerontology.

Annette M. Totten, PhD, MPA

I am currently consulting on long-term care and survey research projects for the Veteran's Administration. Before this, I held a variety of policy, research, and project management positions in government, private foundations, and university-based research centers. My early jobs were for the Ohio House of Representatives and then the John A. Hartford Foundation. Then after finishing an MPA at New York University, I directed health research projects for the New York State Department of Health, the New York University Department of Nursing, and the Columbia University School of Nursing. Since finishing my PHD at University of Minnesota in Health Services Research, I worked for the State Health Data Assistance Center (SHADAC) at the University of Minnesota, directed of the Center for the Study of Aging at Boise State University, and most recently ran a national program for the Center for Home Care Policy and Research at the Visiting Nurse Service of New York.

I co-authored the book, *Meeting the Challenge of Chronic Illness* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005) and I have developed and taught graduate course on aging, health, and social policy; chronic disease epidemiology; and research methods. My research interests include the organization, financing, and quality of care for chronic conditions and long-term care.

2. How did you become interested in Aging? What was your first job in the field?

As a junior in high school, I started working as a nurses' aide in a nursing facility. It was a hard job and at the time, all the training you received was one week on the job with nurses and other aides. I think everyone I worked with tried to the best they could, but it wasn't a very warm, friendly place to live. We were often short staffed and in a hurry. I certainly don't want to live there when I am old.

In college, I majored in International Studies and my undergraduate project was on program evaluation. The two interests didn't come together until after I worked for the Ohio State Legislature and then did a Masters degree in French. After finishing the French degree, I came back to New York City and ended up with a temp job with the John A. Hartford Foundation, a private foundation that was funding programs in Aging and Health. In that job I saw that there were lots of possibilities in the combination of aging and social science and health care research.

3. What was your favorite job or most fulfilling experience in aging?

I hope I haven't had it yet. There have been components of every job I have had so far that I have really liked. Each job brings new people and new challenges. I enjoyed my job at Boise State doing the initial set up the Center for the Study of Aging because I had the chance to work with students and faculty and also with community organizations on projects that had an impact in Idaho.

4. What would your dream job in aging would be?

There is an organization called the International Longevity Center (www.ilcusa.org) and they have partnerships around the world. I frequently say I would like to do a project with the Center in

France. Or that I would like to be a visiting scholar somewhere like Scotland, or New Zealand where they have interesting aging programs. It is often very hard to imagine a system that is totally different from what we have now. I believe seeing how other countries and cultures are handling the aging of their populations would make me more flexible in my own thinking.

5. Advice for those who are interested in the field of gerontology?

First, don't let stereotypes of aging and aging-related work limit what you think about. Gerontology is not just about health care and long-term care. It is about how societies, communities and individuals deal with all aspects of aging. So gerontology can also be about business, or engineering or the arts as well. Second, talk to as many people as you can. People like to talk about their work and you can learn a lot very quickly by talking to a few people in a field or profession.