

2015 WUN Public Health Global Challenge Conference Healthy Ageing – Researching a Lifecourse Approach

27 April 2015

Titles and Abstracts

Plenary 1: Developmental Factors Influencing Healthy Ageing

1. *Developmental Perspective on Healthy Ageing*

Professor Mark Hanson, Director, Academic Unit of Human Development Health, University of Southampton

The process of human ageing commences as early as conception and does not cease until death. Early life influences can affect the trajectory of attainment of potential in many systems and the rate of later decline. This gives new insights into underlying mechanisms, possible intermediate outcome markers of trajectory and interventions to promote healthy ageing.

2. *Healthy Aging Start from the Beginning*

Professor Yan Guo, Vice President, Health Science Center, Peking University

With the acceleration of population aging, people are paying more and more attention to the health of the elderly. But the health problems of the elderly, especially those chronic progressive diseases, can develop in one's youth or even in one's childhood. For example, childhood obesity is associated with a higher risk of obesity, premature death and disability in adulthood. Thus, the concern about the health of the elderly asks for early prevention of adult diseases in childhood. Health promotion within the whole process of life will become one of the essential SDGs involving health.

According to the statistics, 42 million children under 5-year old are overweight or obese around the world, including nearly 35 million children living in developing countries. Projecting this trend forward to the year 2025, it is estimated that there will be 70 million young children who are overweight or obese. Based on the data from China Nutrition Survey and the physique monitoring of Chinese students, this report will analyse the incidences of overweight and obesity at various stages among Chinese children and adolescents and also the influencing factors so as to provide a basis for the control strategy targeting at adult diseases among children.

3. *Life course trajectories: development and decline*

Professor Rebecca Hardy, Scientific Programme Leader, MRC Unit for Lifelong Health & Ageing, University College London

Continuous and normally distributed measures of biological function and structure which exhibit age-related change provide dynamic tools for investigating ageing across life, and the biological imprint of physical and social exposures. Investigating how such markers change across life and the characteristics associated with deviation from what might be considered the underlying 'normal' age-related trajectory is key to fully understanding the ageing process. We highlight how developmental factors, as well as factors from later life, influence the shape of such trajectories.

Plenary 2: Promoting Healthy Ageing in Adults

1. *What Predicts Healthy Ageing*

Professor Leon Flicker, Geriatric Medicine - Winthrop Professor, Centre for Medical Research, The University of Western Australia

Healthy Ageing has often been referred to as “positive” or “successful” ageing although these terms have not been operationalized. The importance of lifestyle and psychosocial factors, in addition to genetic factors, for increasing the probability of reaching older years in a healthy state has been suggested but the effects of these lifestyle factors is far from clear. Some factors such as body mass index may have differing effects throughout the life course. It is also apparent that older people can still be actively engaged with social activities, without major perceived restrictions, even in the presence of major chronic diseases and associated disability.

2. *Psychosocial determinants of health in old age*

Professor Timothy Kwok, Division of Geriatrics, Department of Medicine & Therapeutics, CUHK

Based on the findings of our prospective cohort study of 4,000 older people in Hong Kong, significant geographical variations in health outcomes were found. Self- perceived social status was an important predictor of health outcomes. Psychosocial factors are therefore significant determinants of health in older people.

3. *The Life Course in a New Public Health Approach*

Dr Enrique Vega, Regional Advisor on Healthy Ageing, Pan American Health Organization / World Health Organization

The new longevity revolution make traditional public health approaches useless, as the traditional stage-of-life framework is based on an idea that life stages are uniform, disconnected, and unrelated to each other. This framework is problematic not only in theory but also in practice as it has important negative impact on current public health interventions, the organization of health services and clinical practices. Further, the focus on cause-and-effect disease models, disease-by-disease funding, and stage-by-stage services, makes it difficult to address common causal pathways across conditions. This results in inequitable access to health care, missed opportunities, and an inefficient use of resources. Moreover, current public health methods for gathering evidence preserve it in the present, while beyond this narrow time horizon lie the daunting public health challenges that our generation will leave for future generations, not only for our children but also for the children and grandchildren that our children have.