



MONASH University

PREPARING for an AGEING SOCIETY SEMINAR SERIES

Seminar Series Introduction: Influences on Healthy Ageing

Professor Colette Browning

Director, Monash Research for an Ageing Society

Healthy Ageing Context

- Governments are worried about the **“burden”** of population ageing
- A key driver is the challenges posed by a large cohort of baby boomers
- However population ageing can trigger **positive** changes in the way we live, work and view older people

Healthy Ageing Context

- **Population ageing provides an opportunity to consider creative solutions that will benefit the society and the economy**

Policy Goals in Australia

- **National Strategy for an Ageing Australia 1999 and 2002**
 - Healthy ageing, Ageing workforce, Retirement incomes, Positive attitudes to ageing, Age-friendly infrastructure, Quality health and aged care services
- **Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC) (2003). Promoting Healthy Ageing in Australia.**
 - Vision for extending healthy and productive life expectancy by 10 years by 2050

What is Healthy Ageing?

- **Many related terms: successful ageing, productive ageing, positive ageing, active ageing**
- **Different terminology has been adopted by different governments, researchers and consumer peak bodies**

What is healthy ageing?

- **Browning, C. & Thomas, S. (2007). *Review of successful ageing and related concepts*. Victorian Department of Human Services.**
- **Survey of definitions from research and policy literature**

What is healthy ageing?

Not just health status and longevity

- Achieving or maintaining the best possible state of physical, cognitive and mental **health and well being**
- Meaningful and positive **engagement** with people, community and institutions
- A personal sense of **security, choice and autonomy**
- **Active adaptation** to ageing processes from the individual, familial and societal perspectives

Browning & Thomas (2007)

What is healthy ageing? What older people think

- **Many studies of healthy ageing have used researcher defined concepts of healthy ageing**
- **How do older people define healthy ageing?**

Our studies of healthy ageing

- International program of research in Australia, China, Malaysia and Thailand
- How do older people **understand healthy ageing** and what are their **aspirations and needs** for “the good life” in old age
- Focus group methodology and individual interviews

Centenarians in Guilin, China



Older Chinese in Australia

- Physical and mental health
- Good family life
- Life long learning
- Contributing to family life and society

Older Chinese in Australia

***The first most important thing is health,
the second, the mind must be open, and
the third family***

***Our children should work hard, do a good
job, have achievements in their careers,
then our old people have peace of mind***

Older Chinese in Australia

There are many things worth learning in old age. When the mind is quicker and active, it won't be rusted

In the family, if our children need our help, we can also help them. Then our spirit is happy. We are useful, not useless

Older Malays in Australia

- **Physical, mental, spiritual health**
- **Hope and purpose**
- **Participation/Engagement**
- **Caring/Giving back**
- **Adaptation**
- **Independence**
- **Continuous learning**

Noorlaili Tohit PhD student

Older Malays in Australia

At this age it is more spiritual than material

*What I am aiming for is a blend of the life
here and hereafter*

Noorlaili Tohit PhD student

Older Malays in Australia

*The main thing is to pursue peace,
tranquility and happiness*

*Do a lot of good deeds, if you don't know,
you learn, continues learning to tomb, as
long as you are alive*

Noorlaili Tohit PhD student

How can we achieve healthy ageing?

- **Most studies have focused on individual modifiable risk and protective factors for good and bad outcomes**
 - Risk factors for poor outcomes (poor functioning, disability or death!) or
 - Protective factors for good outcomes (good physical/mental health, happiness, high life satisfaction, avoiding life threatening diseases)

Protective factors for healthy ageing

- **engaging in social and productive activities**
- **moderate alcohol intake**
- **not smoking**
- **moderate levels of physical activity**

Risk factors for unhealthy ageing

- **high blood pressure**
- **high cholesterol levels**
- **being overweight or underweight**

Disease orientation of “healthy” ageing studies

- **The “healthy” ageing outcomes measured in most studies do not capture the range of healthy ageing outcomes and aspirations that older people talk about**
- **The influences on healthy ageing investigated in most studies do not capture how older people understand what determines a “good old age”**

What other factors might be important for healthy ageing?

- **Good nutrition (linked to knowledge, functional abilities, access to food, oral health)**
- **Psychological factors such as resilience**
- **Spirituality**
- **Participation in family life**
- **Contributing to broader community**

What other factors might be important for healthy ageing?

- **Adequate income and savings**
- **Environmental factors:**
 - Climate, housing, parks, recreational and social facilities, transport
- **Access to health and community services**

Where to next?

- **We need to listen more closely to the aspirations and needs of our older citizens**
- **We need to recognise the heterogeneity of the ageing experience**
- **We need to recognise that to achieve healthy ageing at the individual and population level requires interventions and services that address behavioural, social and environmental influences**

Food for all

- **The next presentations focus on the role of food in healthy ageing**
- **Access to food and good nutrition provides a pertinent example of the roles of individual behaviours, social life, the environment and socioeconomic factors in healthy ageing**
- **Healthy eating involves not only good food choices but also the ability to access and prepare food and enjoy the social opportunities afforded by eating**

Food for all

- **The presentations examine the barriers to food access in Melton Shire Council and the local government policy and planning responses to food access**
- **Finally we will invite a facilitated audience discussion of the issues raised today**