

Topic #2: Adapting healthcare for the ever-increasing aging population

I. Background

People around the world are living longer, with most now expected to reach their sixties and beyond. This has resulted in a rising number and proportion of older citizens in every country.

By 2030, one in six people globally will be aged 60 or older, with the population in this age group growing from 1 billion in 2020 to 1.4 billion. By 2050, this figure is expected to double to 2.1 billion, while the number of people aged 80 and above will triple, reaching 426 million. Older individuals are more prone to certain health conditions, including hearing loss, cataracts, refractive errors, back and neck pain, osteoarthritis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes, depression, and dementia. They are also more likely to experience multiple conditions simultaneously.

This means that the aging of the world's population will increase the need for primary health care and long-term care, as well as require a larger and better-prepared workforce. Failure to address the growing demand of health care for the elderly will likely lead to extensive strain on the healthcare industry and a lack of personnel to attend those in need.

II. UN involvement

The United Nations (**UN**) has declared 2021–2030 the Decade of Healthy Ageing, with the World Health Organization (**WHO**) leading its implementation. One of the main tools is the Integrated care for older people (**ICOPE**). This global initiative unites governments, civil society, international agencies, and other stakeholders to promote longer, healthier lives with higher quality for older adults.

Healthy ageing involves developing and maintaining functional ability, influenced by intrinsic capacity (physical and mental capabilities), environmental factors (physical, social), and their interactions.

Building on key frameworks like the WHO Global Strategy on Ageing and the UN Agenda 2030, the Decade focuses on four areas: addressing ageism, creating age-friendly communities, providing person-centred care, and ensuring access to quality long-term care.

III. Useful links

- **World Health Organization (WHO) – Aging and health:**
WHO Aging and health provides important data on the increasing number of elderly people and talks about the health risks that come with it.
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health>
- **United Nations (UN) – Aging:**

UN Aging shows the recent trends in aging as well as other reasons influencing them other than the most obvious.

<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/ageing>

- **World Health Organisation (WHO) – Decade of Healthy Aging:**

WHO Decade of Healthy Aging introduces the steps taken by the UN for this cause.

<https://www.who.int/initiatives/decade-of-healthy-ageing>

- **World Health Organisation (WHO) – Integrated care for older people (ICOPE):**

ICOPE further demonstrates the way this cause has been addressed as of now.

<https://www.who.int/teams/maternal-newborn-child-adolescent-health-and-ageing/ageing-and-health/integrated-care-for-older-people-icope>

IV. Questions to consider

1. How can the healthcare system in my country be restructured to prioritize preventive care and early intervention for age-related conditions, reducing the long-term burden on health services?
2. What strategies can be implemented in my country to ensure equitable access to healthcare for older individuals, particularly from the working and lower-middle classes?
3. How can the member states collaborate to standardize and improve training for healthcare professionals in geriatric care, including managing complex conditions and geriatric syndromes?
4. How can my country address workforce gaps in health care personnel to help reduce the strain on my country's healthcare system?

V. Sources

WHO

- <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health>
- <https://www.who.int/health-topics/ageing>
- <https://www.who.int/teams/maternal-newborn-child-adolescent-health-and-ageing/ageing-and-health/integrated-care-for-older-people-icope>
- <https://www.who.int/initiatives/decade-of-healthy-ageing>

United Nations

- <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/ageing>

NIH

- <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4339729/>
- <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9577145/>