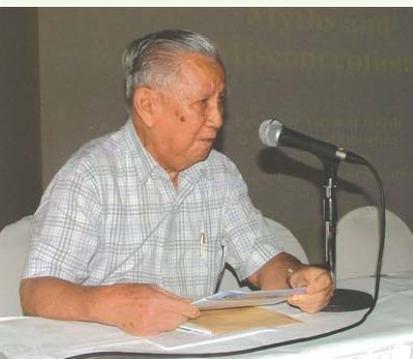


Editorial

A Public seminar with the theme: **“AGEING – Questions you always want to ask the experts”** was organised by the Gerontological Society on 23 April 2005 at the YWCA. The Health Promotion Board sponsored it.



The three expert speakers were from National University Hospital: Professor Victor Goh, Dept. of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Dr Hilary Thean, Dept of Restorative Dentistry, and Professor Shamal

Das, Head, Dept of Orthopaedic Surgery.



The seminar drew a crowd of 100. Short write-ups from the respective speakers are featured in this issue, including a report by Dr Mehta Kalayani, GS Vice President, who represented the society at the Council meeting of the International Association on Gerontology held in Vienna, Austria on 18-20 September last year. **G**

Anti-Ageing Agents:

Myths and Misconceptions

~ By Professor Victor Goh



By 2050, more than 20% will be aged 65 years and above. There will also be some 7000 centenarians as life expectancy is increasing.

Many people are seeking high and low for the fountain of elixir of youth, but by what means? Numerous supplement products are touted to have the potential to turn back the clock on ageing - such as Growth hormones, Melatonin, super-antioxidants, to name but a few. However, do these really work, are there scientific evidence for such claims? Who doesn't wish to look young forever?

Hence, anti-ageing is a very big business with an annual turnover estimated in the region of US\$30 billion. Many are hyping up and cashing in on the public concern on ageing. How can you and I know the validity of the myriad of claims by vendors of all these products in the open market, with each claiming their produce is better than others?

Professor Goh advised the audience to place their trust in appropriately qualified health professionals and to better understand the validation process for medical products before using any of these as a panacea for youth.

“Whether you like it or not, ageing is an ongoing process and cannot be stopped by

any means. However, do note: we cannot choose how we die, but we can choose how we live: we cannot chose to age but we can choose how we age. Promoting healthy ageing is the fundamental aim because it is the process of optimising opportunities for physical, social and mental well-being throughout the life course. To extend healthy life expectancy, healthy ageing is all about us taking ownership of our own health. It means taking measures to prevent those illnesses, which are preventable and delay those that are inevitable. It is about improving the quality of life. As the saying goes "Youth and age are not dates in time, but states of mind. Our duty is not to add years to our lives, but to add life to our years!!!" he said.

Professor Goh cited several challenges arising from the diagnostic health profiling of a cohort of Singaporean men and women: -

- **High cholesterol, body fat and atherogenic risk in men.** Preventive measures include weight reduction and eating healthily.

- **Low bone masses which leads to osteoporosis and osteopenia in the spine and hip.** Calcium supplementation therapy is known to help maintain desirable level of calcium in the body.
- **Frailty.** Regular exercise will improve bone and lean mass, thus reducing the risk of fractures due to falls.
- **High level of work-related stress.** Stress management is the key factor in reducing stressors in life.
- **Chronic circadian disrupted sleep problem.** It is important to deal with insomnia.
- **Partial endocrine dysfunction in ageing man.** A Growth Hormone (GH) augmentation trial conducted in Singapore yielded positive effects.

To sum up, educating the public to adopt a healthy lifestyle, taking ownership of one's ageing process and establishing and promoting evidence-based hormone augmentation therapies are the ways to go!



Backache Soft Bones *and* Osteoporosis

~ By Professor Shamal



Prof Shamal's talk focused on the silent disease, osteoporosis, that is defined as "a reduction of bone masses per unit volume such that fractures may occur with minima trauma".

The commonest cause is post-menopausal osteoporosis. Many are not aware of this condition and do not understand that it is preventable. Statistics in USA showed that 1.3 million fractures occurred per year, and in UK, 200,000 fractures per year. More than one third of adult women will sustain 1 or more osteoporosis fractures in their lifetime. It is

estimated that 51% of osteoporotic fractures in the world will be in Asia by 2050. This silent disease exerts major economic impact and concomitant social impact, for instance, in USA, it cost \$8 billion annually for treating proximal femoral fractures.

Osteoporosis is preventable:-

- Lifestyle changes from young – regular exercise, adequate calcium (1,000-1,500 mg/day), and vitamin D intake (200 IU/day) and stop smoking.
- Diet should contain Calcium rich food such as sardines, shrimps and milk products.

Once again, the buzzwords are: "*prevention is better than cure*".

Dr. Hilary Thean on Dental and Denture Care



The talk by Dr Thean began with a question: "How long do teeth last? Do you know the answer? It is "a lifetime" as evidenced by fossil remains of archaeological finds.

To have a full set of healthy teeth will enable us to enjoy eating food that we like and hence maintain a sense of well-being. Adults often lose their teeth due to periodontal (gum) disease and dental decay, which are preventable.

The good news is that lost teeth can be replaced by various means, e.g. denture, which can be partial or complete, and titanium implant. However, she warned that although teeth can be replaced by spare parts, they must be properly maintained. It is a fallacy for those who think that once they have no more natural teeth, they will have no more tooth problems. Stomatitis, Angular Cheilitis (a fungal infection of the corner of the mouth), atrophy of the maxillary supporting bone, hyperplasia, and ulcers are some examples of common denture problems.

How to prevent oral disease and to maintain a good set of health teeth?

Her advice is for you to see the dentist regularly; this will allow the dentist to check tissues in the mouth to ensure there are no signs of disease. Dentures need to be 'serviced' annually and they should be renewed every 3-5 years if they are to function well.

Advice on daily maintenance of dentures includes the followings: -

- Rinse after every meal
- Brush with special denture brush and detergent every day
- Soak in clean glass of water when not in use. Water must be changed at least once a day.

It is still best to keep you own teeth, so how to maintain them?

- Brush teeth or rinse mouth after every meal
- Use a fluoride toothpaste
- Avoid sticky and sugary foods
- Automatic toothbrush brushes cleaner
- Maintain balanced diet
- Adequate intake of water, vitamins, vegetables, protein and carbohydrates. 

Some Information on Mental Health Talks/Forums organised by IMH and supported by HPB:

a) For HealthCare Professionals

- Talks on "Depression and Suicide in the Elderly", 1 Aug, 9am-12pm and 2pm - 5pm, at Atrium Hall, IMH
- Talk on "Dementia", 2 Aug at St Luke's Day Centre
- Talk on "Dementia & Other Psychotic Disorders in the Elderly", 23 Aug at Society for the Aged Sick
- Talk on "Management of Geriatric Depression : An Update". 9 Sep, 1-2pm at Ang Mo Kio Hospital

b) For General Public

- Public Forum on "Dementia", 10 Sept, 2-5pm at York Hotel
(concurrent sessions in English and Mandarin)

For more information/registration, please contact Gina of IMH at Tel: 63892833
or e-mail at Gina_Teo@imh.com.sg

COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA

18 – 20 SEPTEMBER 2004

~ by A/Professor Kalyani K.Mehta
(Vice-President, International Affairs)

The IAG Council meeting, chaired by Professor Gloria Gutman (President), was held from 18-20 September 2004 in Vienna, Austria. It was a very successful event as more than 60 delegates attended the meeting.

It was my privilege to attend the event as the representative from Gerontological Society, Singapore. At the first session, held on Saturday 18th September, an update was delivered by the President on the current status of IAG. She mentioned that in the last 4 years the membership had increased (4 new members had joined).

The Student Grant Fund had been tapped by 7 member associations and Prof. Gutman urged more members to apply for the grant of US\$800/- per organization.

Encouraging a dynamic student membership would generate interest in ageing issues among younger cohorts as well as ensure the sustenance of the societies. Application forms were available from the IAG website.

The representatives from Brazil were given an opportunity to update participants on the preparation for the next IAG Scientific Congress scheduled to be held in Rio de Janeiro from 26 – 30 June 2005. Discussion on how to ensure adequate publicity and a good response from the global community ensued. Use of websites of member societies to provide links to the Congress website www.gerontology2005.org.br was one of the suggestions. The audience was informed that travel grants to facilitate attendance by student members would be available.

The second session was held on Sunday 19th September. Current developments and challenges facing the IAG were discussed. A World Aging Survey is being planned and Profs. Jean-Marie Robine and Carol Jagger have been appointed as co-chairs of the Working Group assigned to conduct the survey.

As part of information exchange and networking, the IAG co-sponsored the 6th World Congress of Aging and Physical Activity held at London, Ontario.

IAG has significantly increased its representation in United Nations committees such as CONGO, DPI and ECOSOC. The IAG is actively involved in getting issues of ageing on the agenda of help for HIV AIDS affected families. Since older people form a substantial proportion of caregivers for this target population, such efforts are necessary. Dr Astrid Strukelberger was invited to present a summary of recent gerontology-related activities in the UN in the past year. She stressed that the IAG, a scientifically based non-government organization is well placed to make significant contributions to the UN.

Next on the agenda was a long discussion on changes to the IAG constitution. Currently, only one organization, which meets the criteria, is approved per country. The pros and cons of continuing this policy were argued by the members present.

Finally, it was passed that more than one national organization can become members of IAG from one nation. However, certain criteria would have to be met such as:

- 1) The constitution of the potential organization/society should show multi-disciplinary membership, research and training.
- 2) The membership should be at least 50. The Council would be the final approving body.

It was also proposed that the name of IAG should be changed to reflect the introduction of new policies. One proposal was "International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics". The changing of the name would be carried out by e-circulation and vote by the Council.

The next Asia Oceania regional meeting/conference will be held in Beijing, China in 2007 (tentatively 17-19th October). The China National Committee on Aging and the Gerontological Society of China are the co-organisers.

The treasurer of the IAG presented the financial statements which were passed by the members present.

The President thanked all present for their enthusiasm and commitment to IAG, thus drawing the Council meeting to a close.

Such international meetings are important for sustaining the interest of member societies as well as to update delegates on the progress of the IAG. 

Now it is time to laugh

GRANDPA'S FORMULA



Grandpa was celebrating his 100th birthday and everybody complimented him on how athletic and well-preserved he appeared. "Gentleman, I will tell you the secret of my success," he cackled. "I have been in the open air day after day for some 75 years now." The celebrants were impressed and asked how he managed to keep up his rigorous fitness regime. "Well, you see, my wife and I were married 75 years ago. On our wedding night, we made a solemn pledge. Whenever we had a fight, the one who was proved wrong would go outside and take a walk."

([Http://members.tpripod.com](http://members.tpripod.com))

Editorial's reply. Here's Grandma's story "Well, I am also 100 years old and I looked half my age. I made a pledge with my husband on our wedding day. Whenever we had a fight, the one who was proved wrong will have to contribute towards the other's future cosmetic surgeries whenever and wherever they are needed. Now, you know who loses the fights all the time!" 

AGM Notice

The 19th Annual General Meeting of the Gerontological Society will be held on Saturday, 27 August 2005 at 2.30pm at YWCA Ballroom, 6 Fort Canning Lodge Singapore 179494. The agenda for AGM will be forward to all GS members in due course.

Editorial Board : Dr. Chow Yeow Leng
Mr Laurence Wee
Mr Henry Lim
Mr Seen Keen Fai

Published by
Gerontological Society of Singapore
c/o No. 5 Mayflower Terrace
Singapore 568550
Printed by : Milton Press Co Pte Ltd

In Conjunction with its 19th Annual General Meeting
Gerontological Society of Singapore presents
A Talk On
FINANCIAL SECURITY



For the Elderly Through Continuing Employment

By The Honourable Minister without Portfolio
Mr. Lim Boon Heng

**on 27 August 2005 (Saturday) YWCA, Ballroom,
6 Fort Canning Lodge, Singapore 179494**

Chairperson

Mr Henry Lim, BBM
President, Gerontological Society

Guest of Honour

The Honourable Minister
Mr Lim Boon Heng
**Minister without Portfolio &
Secretary General (National Trade Union Congress)**

Our Panel Speakers

Mr Alex Chan
NMP, Vice President
Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF)

Mr Phua Kok Tee
CEO, Singapore Action Group of Elders (SAGE)

2.00pm – Registration
2.30pm – AGM
3.30pm – Talk
4.30pm – Tea Reception
5.30pm – End of Programme



..... **REGISTRATION**

(\$10.00 per person. Free for members)

Name _____ Address _____

Signature _____ Cheque No _____ Amount: S\$ _____

Please make cheque payable to “Gerontological Society” c/o Mr Allan Choo, 5 Mayflower Terrace, S’pore 568550
(For enquiries : Allan Choo @ 64525085 / Richard @ 63775183)