



## New President Speaks...

In the first AGM 23 years ago at the Alumni House of the Singapore General Hospital, there were only 20 of us. Our last AGM in August at the York Hotel saw a larger crowd and Mr Laurence Wee, who presided over the meeting, was radiant when he said, "The Society has grown."

This is my second tour of duty and I take over from Laurence who has carved a name with pride for GS.

In October, Laurence accepted an office space for GS at the Golden Wall Centre - this is another milestone and we must thank Mr Henry Lim for his generosity.

The Society will continue its role in public education and to advise on issues of gerontology.

We are delighted that the annual Henry Lim Lecture has never failed to draw a large audience in the past 2 years. The 3rd Henry Lim Lecture is scheduled in March next year and details will be sent to you in due course.

In 2 years' time, we shall be celebrating the silver anniversary of GS and we are assembling a committee to plan some activities. Will keep you posted.

On behalf of the Council, I wish all readers a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

**Professor Kua Ee Heok, MBBS, MD, FRCPsych, PBM  
President, Gerontological Society**

*"The Society will continue its role in public education and to advise on issues of gerontology" ...Prof Kua*

## I have a dream...

**Active Ageing Programme: Family, Work and Community Workshop 14 - 16 Sep 09**



At a recent 3-day workshop I attended, organized by the Council of Third Age and the Oxford Institute of Ageing, we did a future scenario planning exercise. In the exercise, we were asked to envisage what Singapore would be like in thirty years; politically, economically, socially, technologically etc. Many interesting insights were shared and participants had a field time painting a future Singapore Ageing Society.

On hindsight, I realized that I have a personal vision of what kind of an ageing society we should have. I hope that when I am old myself, the society would view the elderly truly as an asset rather than as a liability. How?

I have a dream...that in thirty years, our society would have advanced to a stage when our social security system would be able to take care of all aged Singaporeans after retirement in their basic subsistence. Hence, when basic needs are met, I believe that this baby boomer

### GS Council 2009 - 2010

President: Prof Kua Ee Heok

Immediate Past President: Mr Laurence Wee

Members: Dr Kalyani Mehta, Dr Chow Yeow Leng, Mr Phua Kok Tee, Mr Henry Lim, Ms Shirley Lim

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Asst. Hon. Treasurer: Mrs Ellen Cheng

Hon. Legal Advisor: Mr Dennis Lim

Cont. from page 1: *I Have A Dream*

generation or even later will be able to contribute to other spheres in making Singapore a more gracious and mature society.

For example, I envision that in the future, many of our seniors if properly taken care of by an inclusive social security system and need not worry about their livelihood, would be able to contribute to the arts and social scene.

Being better educated, this generation of seniors would have higher aspirations in self actualization. More opportunities should be made available for the aspiring

seniors to be able to learn and contribute to these areas and should be encouraged to do so. Classes in various aesthetic fields should be organized and subsidized to encourage active participation by these seniors.

Many of these elderly with relevant skills and experience can also be encouraged to more proactive in championing social and civic causes. Training and incentives can be provided to coach seniors with a passion to start their own 'pet' clubs or associations.

I have a dream...  
Tristan Gwee

# TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS...



Associate Professor Tan Chay Hoon  
Consultant Psychiatrist, Pharmacologist, NUHS

## FACTS or MYTHS:

1. The challenges to care for older people can be some of the toughest you've faced
2. Watching a loved one affected by illness of old age is very stressful
3. Day-to-day concern : remind them to take their medicine, meals is very easy
4. Decision to let the elderly parents stay with me OR send them to a nursing home is straight forward
5. It is easy to treat older people with dementia or sensory handicap with kindness and love

## Mental Health of Caregivers

- Many caregivers feel overwhelmed, frustrated, angry and upset about having to cope with a loved one's illness
- Anxiety can make you Feel sick
- Anxiety can stop you from Sleeping well
- Worrying does not help any situation

## Five tips for caregivers

### **Treat the older person with kindness and love.**

Dignity is important. The patient may be able to understand what is being said. So never discuss his condition or make any morbid remarks while at his bedside. The non verbal component of speaking can trigger suspicion and anger from the elderly. So it is good to respect the elderly and treat them with dignity.

### **Obtain useful knowledge from specialists who are treating the older person**

Knowledge is power! Your doctor is a good starting point

for information, advice, treatment and referral. To calm your fears and anxiety, find out as much as you can about the illness. For example, How to handle the behavioural problems? How to cope with paranoia? How to cope with the emotional issues such as shouting at the elderly parents, feelings of guilt etc.



### **Look after yourself and Seek Support**

Caregivers need support in coping with feelings of guilt and anger. Do Not ignore your own needs : list what you needs, ways to achieve the needs in another column. Take care of yourself and you are equipped to provide high quality care for your loved one.

- Keep physically strong and healthy
- Keep up-to-date for news
- Keep up with friends: Talking to an understanding friend can bring much relief
- Keep house friendly for elderly
- Think ahead about what might go wrong, anticipate how you might deal with it.



### **Be Calm and Patient in discussing openly with the elderly**

Talk openly with the older person, humour can help. Try to accept your own discomfort



### **Family discussion**

Honest discussion with family members can create peaceful family atmosphere. This will help the elderly. Also keeping an objective attitude in the discussion with clear goals help.



# X1Xth World Congress of the IAGG 2009

held in Paris,  
France 5 - 9 th  
July Palais des  
Congress

By A/P Kalyani K.Mehta

The X1Xth World Congress was a resounding success as close to 6000 delegates attended from more than 30 countries. The organizers received 600 submitted symposia and more than 4400 abstracts. It was very well organized and the facilities were of high standard. The Congress venue was accessible by train and shuttle buses were arranged on certain times to the airport. The abstracts are available online at [www.iagg.com.br](http://www.iagg.com.br)

## International Council meeting

The International Council meetings were held on two afternoons i.e. July 6 and 7. On the first day the outgoing President Renato from Brazil gave a detailed speech about the achievements of the IAGG during the period 2004 - 2009. He emphasized that he had obtained for IAGG a special consultative status in the United Nations and in this way IAGG would have greater influence over UN's policies and programs for older people in the world. He had also moved forward with great success, the idea of Collaborative centres and was happy to report that 29 centres had been set up. He hoped that the new executive committee would continue this endeavour. He outlines four main focuses of IAGG:

- Alzheimer's disease to be viewed as a multidisciplinary public health problem
- End-of-life or palliative care should be developed
- Intensive care for older persons (intensive care units are not a substitute for palliative care)
- The Hall of Great Names on the IAGG website

Three new member societies had joined during the period 2005-2009 but American Geriatrics Society had withdrawn (however, at the end of the second day of the program it was announced that American Geriatrics Society was intending to rejoin).

On the second day, the main highlight was the presentation by the bidder of the 2017 international congress. The Gerontological Society of America bid for the Congress to be held in San Francisco, USA. As there were no contestants and the presentation was satisfactory, they won the bid.

The new President Mr Bruno Vellas then made his speech and invited all the members to continue to co-operate with

his executive committee. He also informed everyone of the Virtual College on the IAGG website and assured the house that there would be a good profit for the Association from the Paris conference. The African continent was welcomed into the international council and Ms Isabella was voted in as the representative. There was some discussion about the benefit of having a permanent administrative office instead a rotating one as the latter involved much cost. However, since there were many issues attached to the decision, it would have to be discussed further.

## Council meeting of Asia/Oceania region

On Sunday 5th July, the Council of the Asia/Oceania region chaired by Prof Ouchi was held from 1 - 5 pm. The regional council had 14 members but not all were present. Representatives from 6 countries were present at the Council meeting. A new application had been received from Mongolia.

To the disappointment of members present, the President-elect from China Prof Du Peng was absent. (Later it was found that he had registered at the conference but had mistaken the date and time of the meeting). Hence, Prof Ouchi, the out-going President was the chair of the meeting. One of the matters under discussion was the deficit incurred by the organizers of the Beijing Conference 2007. Hence, the finances of the Regional office were low. The Council discussed ways to keep the costs low until the next meeting in Melbourne in 2011. The organizers of the Melbourne conference gave an update on the progress of the planning of the 2011 conference. They also informed that travel grants would be given to eligible graduate students.

The Korean representatives also gave a progress report of their planning for the 2013 international world congress. The theme was "Digital @ging: New Horizon for all ages." and it would be held at COEX, Seoul.

A new task force was suggested to look into a review of the Regional Council and come up with ideas to stabilize the region's finances. The members nominated were Dr Tony Setiabudi (Indonesia) Dr Laura Buys (Australia) Dr Edward Leung (Hong Kong) and Dr Kalyani Mehta (Singapore). It would be chaired by Prof Ouchi.

The meeting ended on the note that Prof Du Peng would be contacted by Prof Ouchi and through email it would be confirmed whether former will be the next Chair of the region. (This was later cleared by email correspondence and Prof Du Peng is the new Chair of the Regional Council and Prof Bill Chan is the secretary).

## Conference participation

Dr Kalyani Mehta, Council representative from Singapore Gerontological council presented two papers at the conference. The details are below:

Symposium title: State Social policies for family caregivers in four countries: what lessons can we learn?

Paper title: Time to examine Singapore's policies for family caregivers.

Symposium title: Migrant long-term care work as a rising challenge for elder care research, policy and practice: international developments.

Paper title: Migrant care workers in Singapore: the Asian experience

To summarise, SGS is well recognized at the international level and our participation is important in keeping us connected internationally.

# Determinants of Successful Aging . . . .



## use of multidimensional definition among Chinese elderly in Singapore

A/Prof Ng Tze Pin Ng, Dr Birit F.P. Broekman,  
Dr Matthew Niti, Prof Kua Ee Heok

Gerontology Research Programme, Dept of Psychological Medicine, National University of Singapore  
The research was supported by a grant (03/1/21/17/214) from the Biomedical Research Council (BMRC)  
Article is published in : American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry 2009, Vol 17, Page 407-416

Successful aging is a focus of attention of both academic researchers and policy planners worldwide. Earlier studies have variously defined successful aging using narrowly defined single dimensional biomedical, psychological or social functioning constructs . Increasingly, the concept of successful ageing has extended beyond health maintenance to include personal well-being, autonomy and psychological adjustment. There is thus growing recognition that a multidimensional definition of successful ageing that incorporates life satisfaction, maintenance of an active life style, psychological resilience, and good supportive relationships is more widely acceptable and relevant for evaluating outcomes of population-based interventions designed to promote active healthy aging.

An important focus of continuing research is on understanding and identifying predictors of successful aging so that public policies and programmes can be more meaningfully informed. Varying numbers of predictors are identified from studies using different definitions of successful aging. The majority of studies have used definitions of successful aging based on the absence of disability with lesser inclusion of psychosocial variables, and most frequently identified age (young-old), nonsmoking, and

absence of disability, arthritis, and diabetes as significant correlates. Moderate support was found for greater physical activity, more social contacts, better self-rated health, absence of depression and cognitive impairment, and fewer medical conditions, but gender, income, education, and marital status generally did not relate to successful aging. Of note, psychosocial variables are identified by elderly persons as integral to successful aging, but have received less research attention.

The use of a restricted definition of successful aging or a limited range of candidate predictor variables in different studies limit understanding of the full extent to which many different determinants could be usefully identified for effective interventions. For example, resource and behavioral factors including nutrition are important in social and health interventions in the elderly, but few studies have explored them as primary determinants of successful ageing . Hence, a more complete range of modifiable and behavioral predictors of successful aging that are broadly relevant for public health interventions may be identified by using multidimensional definitions of successful ageing and exploring a wider range of variables.

Successful aging may also be influenced by culture. Positive spirituality is integral to successful aging and in Asian cultures, for example, psychosocial support is shaped by moral values, such as respect for old age and filial piety. It is thus of great interest to explore successful aging in different cultures.

In this study of Chinese elderly 65 years and above in Singapore, we proposed a definition of successful ageing using four dimensions of wellbeing: physical health, mental health, social functioning and satisfaction with life, and explored its association with a multiplicity of potential risk factors and correlates and quality of life outcome.

## Abstract

### Objective

Most studies of successful ageing have used restricted definitions based on the absence of disability and identified a small number of predictors. We aimed to examine whether a broad multidimensional definition of successful ageing may identify a wider range of predictors that are relevant for population-based interventions.

### Methods

Using data from the Singapore Longitudinal Aging Study of 1289 community-living Chinese elderly of 65 years and above, successful aging was measured in four dimensions: cognitive and mental health; physical health; social functioning and life satisfaction. Potential determinants included socio-demographic, psychosocial, behavioural and health-related variables.

### Results

Successful aging was determined in 46% of respondents, and in multivariate models was significantly associated with being male (OR=1.57),  $\geq 6$  years of education (OR=1.63), better social network and support (OR=1.77), religious or spiritual beliefs (OR=1.56), physical activities and exercise (OR=1.55), low or no nutritional risk (OR=1.51),  $< 5$  prescription drugs (Or=1.80), IADL independence (OR=1.77) and better gait and balance (OR=1.06 per unit score increase).

## Conclusion

In contrast to findings based on more restricted biomedical definitions of successful aging, in this study of Chinese elderly, a multidimensional definition of successful aging identified more variables including gender, education, psychosocial support, spirituality and nutrition as important determinants. This is pertinent to broad-based approaches of multi-faceted interventions which are relevant in population-based programmes designed to promote active and healthy aging.



# In and Around..

GS AGM 2009  
29th August 2009, York Hotel



GS Seminar ...  
**Ageing & Mental Health**  
3rd October 2009, York Hotel



Speakers :  
A/P Goh Lee Gan, *President, College of Family Physicians*  
A/P Tan Chay Hoon, *Consultant Psychiatrist/Pharmacologist NUHS*  
A/P Roger Ho, *Dept of Psychological Medicine, NUHS*  
Prof Kua Ee Heok, *President of Gerontological Society*  
Sponsor : Messrs Lundbeck

## \*\* ANNOUNCEMENT \*\*

### Public Symposium - Ageing in Singapore

Organized by Gerontological Society

Sat 27 March 2010 (2-5pm) @ York Hotel

3rd Henry Lim Lecture: "SILVER ENTERPRISE"

by Gerard Ee, Chairman Council for Third Age  
(Chairperson : Prof Kua Ee Heok, President GS)

**Elderly Living Alone:** Ng Tze Pin, Assistant Professor &  
Coordinator, Research Programme, NUHS  
(Chairperson: Chow Yeow Leng, Assistant Professor, Alice  
School of Nursing, NUHS)

Registration: Shirley @ 633 44445 Ext 103

Admission: \$10.00 (Please make cheque payable to  
"Gerontological Society")

c/o 89 Short Street #08-08 Singapore 188216

### 1st Asia-Pacific Conference on Ageing (APCA)

**Ageing with Dignity and Grace -**

**Challenges and Opportunities** (24 - 26 March 2011)

We have assembled for this conference leading thinkers, policy makers, practitioners and researchers in the field of gerontology and elderly healthcare. They will share their experiences in the plenary sessions, symposia, workshops, poster presentation and case conferences.

APCA will be a great opportunity to meet the experts and to be inspired by new ideas on ageing issues.

Look out for more details at our website soon. ([www.gs.org.sg](http://www.gs.org.sg))

#### EDITORIAL TEAM:

Dr Chow Yeow Leng, Mr Tristan Gwee  
Mr Henry Lim, Mr Laurence Wee

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