

Centre for Policy on Ageing
Information Service

Selected Readings

Centenarians

May 2021

The Centre for Policy on Ageing's selected readings are drawn from material held on the CPA Ageinfo database of ageing and older age.

All items are held by the CPA library and information service, which is open to the public by appointment.

Photocopies may be ordered where copyright laws permit.

Centre for Policy on Ageing

Tavis House, 1-6 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9NA
Telephone +44 (0)20 7553 6500 Facsimile +44 (0)20 7553 6501
Email cpa@cpa.org.uk Website www.cpa.org.uk

2020

Centenarians: a film review; by Lauren Price, Alison Larsen.: Taylor and Francis, April 2020, pp 250-252.
Journal of Gerontological Social Work, vol 63, no 3, April 2020, pp 250-252.

This short documentary is one episode in an Australian series called "You Can't Ask That" where individuals electronically submit questions that they have always wanted to ask a specific demographic. In this episode, eight older adults, over the age of 100, are asked questions such as "why aren't you dead yet?" and "when did you last have sex?" Although some of the questions are silly and lighthearted, others such as "what's it like watching all of your friends die?" really strike a chord with the interviewees. Centenarians give some good life advice throughout the 26 minute episode, but their words of wisdom will stay with many for a lifetime.

ISSN: 01634372

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Just another day: the lived experience of being a hundred years old for ten New Zealanders; by Ashwina Ratan, Kay de Vries.: Cambridge University Press, July 2020, pp 1387-1404.

Ageing and Society, vol 40, no 7, July 2020, pp 1387-1404.

The aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the experiences of extended longevity as perceived by centenarians. Centenarians (people over 100 years of age) are the fastest growing group of the ageing population in developed countries. Ten centenarians aged between 100 and 106 years, living in the Lower North Island of New Zealand, participated in the study. The biographical narrative interpretive method of inquiry guided data collection through face-to-face interviews, and thematic analysis was subsequently undertaken. Four themes were identified: (a) 'becoming a centenarian': 'Just another day'; (b) 'growing up in a privileged environment' that revealed four sub-themes: 'having freedom and choice', 'being loved and nurtured', 'living healthy lifestyles' and having 'good education prospects'; (c) 'unique opportunities in adult life'; and (d) 'positive ageing and celebration of longevity'. The centenarians spoke nonchalantly about their experience of turning 100 and positive personalities were prominent features of the participants, who all expressed a sense of acceptance and satisfaction with life and contentment with living in the present, a feature throughout their lives that was ongoing and at an intergenerational level. This study has provided further insights into the existing literature on longevity and through the narratives of the centenarians has demonstrated the value of Erikson's psycho-social stages of development and Tornstam's theory of gerotranscendence when considering positive ageing.

ISSN: 0144686X

From : <http://www.cambridge.org/aso>

2019

Thinking about the end of life when it is near: a comparison of German and Portuguese centenarians; by Kathrin Boerner, Daniela S Jopp, Kyungmin Kim (et al): Sage, March 2019, pp 265-285.

Research on Aging, vol 41, no 3, March 2019, pp 265-285.

This study examined the extent to which thinking of and planning for the end of life (EOL) is widespread among German and Portuguese centenarians, and whether patterns of EOL views are shaped by cultural and individual characteristics. A significant proportion of centenarians in both countries reported not thinking about the EOL, not believing in the afterlife, and not having made EOL arrangements. Latent class analysis identified three EOL patterns: Class 1 (EOL thoughts with EOL arrangements and afterlife beliefs), Class 2 (EOL arrangements and afterlife beliefs without EOL thoughts), and Class 3 (Overall low endorsement of EOL items). The proportion of Portuguese centenarians was higher in Class 1, and of German centenarians higher in Classes 2 and 3. Centenarians' demographic, social, and health characteristics were significantly different across EOL patterns. As lack of EOL planning can result in poor EOL quality, enhancing communication among centenarians, family, and health-care professionals seems imperative. (RH)

From : <http://www.journals.sagepub.com/home/roa>

2018

Estimates of the very old, including centenarians, UK: 2002 to 2017: annual mid-year population estimates for people aged 90 years and over by sex and single year of age (90 to 104) and 105 years and over, and comparisons between UK countries; by Office for National Statistics - ONS.: Office for National Statistics - ONS, 25 September 2018, 9 pp (Statistical bulletin).

The number of people aged 90 years and over in the UK continues to increase: there were 579,776 in 2017. Of those aged 90+, three quarters (76.8%) were aged under 95, and a fifth (20.7%) were aged 95 to 99. While the number of centenarians is still very small (only 2.5% of those aged 90+), their number has increased by 85% in the last 15 years. This Statistical bulletin includes graphs which for example show that the sex ratio at older ages

continues to narrow: there are two women aged 90 to 94 years for every man in that age group, and fewer than five women for every male centenarian. Across the UK, Wales has the highest proportion of residents aged 90 years and over, and the highest proportion of centenarians. Also included are links to related statistics and data sets. (RH)

From : <http://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/estimatesoftheveryoldincludingcentenarians2002to2017>

The oldest old and the risk of social exclusion; by Wesley Key, Martin Culliney.: Cambridge University Press, January 2018, pp 47-63.

Social Policy and Society, vol 17, no 1, January 2018, pp 47-63.

This article examines whether people aged 85 and over, referred to throughout as 'The Oldest Old', are more likely to suffer from social exclusion than people aged 65 to 84. Social Exclusion is defined according to the four dimensions identified in the 1999 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey. Using data from Understanding Society (the UK Household Longitudinal Study, UKHLS), the analysis finds that the Oldest Old have a higher likelihood of experiencing social exclusion than people aged 65 to 84. These findings illustrate the risks facing the Oldest Old, and highlight the policy challenges presented by ageing western populations. (RH)

ISSN: 14747464

From : <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/14239/1/Culliney%20-%20oldest%20old%20and%20the%20risk%20of%20social%20exclusion.pdf>

The relationship between vision impairment and well-being among centenarians: findings from the Georgia Centenarian Study; by Aya Toyoshima, Peter Martin, Shinichi Sato, Leonard W Poon.: Wiley, February 2018, pp 414-422.

International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, vol 33, no 2, February 2018, pp 414-422.

This study used the data set of the Georgia Centenarian Study including 106 centenarians (18 men and 88 women). It used scores of the Snellen chart for objective vision and self-reports for subjective vision. Social support, depression and loneliness were also assessed. Approximately 75% of the centenarians showed some level of objective visual impairment, and 56% of them reported that they had visual impairment. Objective vision impairment was significantly related to depression. Multiple regression analysis revealed that both variables of visual function were significantly associated with depression, but not loneliness. In the model including depression, a significant interaction was obtained for social support and objective vision. Centenarians reported lower level of depression when they had social support. However centenarians who had low level of visual function tended to report higher depression even if they had social support. These results indicate that vision function was related to centenarians' well-being, especially depression. (JL)

ISSN: 08856230

From : <http://www.orangejournal.org>

2017

Chronic conditions and use of health care service among German centenarians; by Petra Von Berenberg, Dagmar Drager, Thomas Zahn (et al.): Oxford University Press, November 2017, pp 939-945.

Age and Ageing, vol 46, no 6, November 2017, pp 939-945.

There is limited data comparing conditions and health service use across care settings in centenarians. To improve health service delivery in centenarians, the aim of this study was to compare the proportion of centenarians who have chronic conditions, take medication and use health care services across different care settings. This cohort study used routine data from a major health insurance company serving Berlin, Germany and the surrounding region, containing almost complete information on health care transactions. The sample comprised 1,121 insured individuals aged 100 years and older. Community-dwelling and institutionalised individuals were included. Charlson comorbidity index was based on 5 years of recordings. Hospital stays, medical specialist visits and medication prescribed in the previous year were analysed. While 6% of the centenarians did not receive any support, 45% received family homecare or homecare by professional care services, and 49% were in long-term care. The most frequent conditions were dementia and rheumatic disease/arthritis, with the highest prevalence found among long-term care residents. A total of 97% of the centenarians saw a general practitioner in the previous year. Women were more often in long-term care and less often without any care. Centenarians with long-term care showed higher proportions of comorbidities, greater medication use and more visits to medical specialists compared with centenarians in other care settings. The higher prevalence of dementia and rheumatic disease/arthritis in long-term care compared to other care settings emphasises the role of these diseases in relation to the loss of physical and cognitive functioning. (JL)

ISSN: 00020729

From : <https://doi.org/10.1093/ageing/afx008>

Rise of the super-agers; by Xan Rice.
New Statesman, 7 April 2017, pp 46-49.

As living to 100 becomes more common, the exploits of an extraordinary set of athletes are forcing scientists to reassess the relationship between performance and growing old. This article provides some examples of fitness regimes of mountaineers and athletes aged 80+ who have taken up or resumed their chosen sport well into retirement. (RH)

ISSN: 13647431

From : www.newstatesman.co.uk

2016

Centenarian athletes: examples of ultimate human performance?; by Romuald Lepers, Paul J Stapley, Thomas Cattagni.: Oxford University Press, September 2016, pp 729-733.

Age and Ageing, vol 45, no 5, September 2016, pp 729-733.

Some centenarians engage in regular physical activity, and sometimes in sporting events. The authors aimed to identify world records of centenarian athletes in several sports, and to determine which represented the best performance when compared to all-age world records, all disciplines taken together. All of the best performances achieved by centenarians were identified and compared in three disciplines: athletics, swimming and cycling. The performances were considered as an average of the respective speeds, except for jumping and throwing events for which the maximum distances performed were considered. Within each discipline, the decline in performance of centenarian athletes was expressed as a percentage of the world record for that discipline. In total, 60 performances of centenarian athletes were found. These performances belong to 19 individuals: 10 in athletics, 8 in swimming and 1 in cycling. The centenarian world record performed by Robert Marchand in one hour track cycling appears to be the best performance (-50.6% compared with the all-age world record in this discipline) achieved by a centenarian. Although the physiological characteristics of Robert Marchand are certainly exceptional, his remarkable performance could also be due to the lower age-related decline for cycling performances compared with running and swimming. The observations in this article offer new perspectives on how the human body can resist the deleterious effects of ageing. (RH)

ISSN: 00020729

From : www.ageing.oxfordjournals.org

Challenges experienced at age 100: findings from the Fordham Centenarian Study; by Daniela S Jopp, Kathrin Boerner, Verena Cimarolli (et al.): Routledge, July-September 2016, pp 187-207.

Journal of Aging and Social Policy, vol 28, no 3, July-September 2016, pp 187-207.

The challenges experienced by very old individuals and their consequences for well-being and mental health are examined. In order to capture unique issues experienced in very old age, 75 participants of the population-based Fordham Centenarian Study answered open-ended questions on everyday challenges. Theme-based coding was then used to categorise and quantify responses. The challenges mentioned most often were challenges faced in the functional (e.g. physical health or activities of daily living restrictions, mobility, sensory impairment), psychological (e.g. loss of well-liked activity, dependency, negative emotions, death), and social (e.g. family loss) life domains. Functional challenges were negatively associated with ageing satisfaction and positively associated with loneliness. Psychological challenges were positively linked to ageing satisfaction. Social challenges were marginally related to loneliness. Notably, challenges were not related to depression. In conclusion, the challenges experienced in very old age are multidimensional and multifaceted, unique in nature, and have differential relations to mental health. Functional, psychological and social challenges affect very old individuals' lives, and therefore need to be better understood and addressed. Given their consequences, it is imperative for policy makers to develop an awareness for the different types of challenges faced by centenarians, as there may be unique policy implications related to each. (RH)

ISSN: 08959420

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Do you want to live to be 100?: Answers from older people; by Helena Karppinen, Marja-Liisa Laakkonen, Timo E Strandberg ... (et al.): Oxford University Press, July 2016, pp 543-549.

Age and Ageing, vol 45, no 4, July 2016, pp 543-549.

Little is known about the oldest olds' views on ageing. The present study, based in Helsinki, Finland, aimed to investigate older people's desire and the reasons they give for wanting to live to 100. The study used a structured self-completed questionnaire with an open-ended question on the reasons why/why not participants wished/did not wish to live to 100. One-third (32.9%) of home-dwelling older people wanted to live to be 100. Those who did were older, more often male and self-rated their health better than those who did not. Often the desire for long life was conditional: 'Yes, if I stay healthy'. Among the reasons was that many were curious to see what

would happen. Many stated that they loved life, they had twinkle in their eye or significant life roles. Those who did not want to live extremely long lives gave various rationales: they would become disabled, life would be meaningless, they were reluctant to become a burden to others or they feared loss of autonomy or suffering pain or loneliness. Some people also shared the view that they should not intervene in destiny or they felt that they had accomplished what they wanted in life. Overall one-third of the oldest old participants wanted to live to 100. Identifying what motivated them to desire long life could be a resource in their care plans. (JL)

ISSN: 00020729

From : www.ageing.oxfordjournals.org

Health status, living arrangements, and service use at 100: findings from the Oporto Centenarian Study; by Oscar Ribeiro, Lia Araujo, Laetitia Teixeira (et al.): Routledge, July-September 2016, pp 148-164.

Journal of Aging and Social Policy, vol 28, no 3, July-September 2016, pp 148-164.

This paper describes the sociodemographic characteristics, health status and service use of Portuguese centenarians living in the community and centenarians residing in an elder care facility or nursing home, and examines their main differences. Participants were 140 centenarians from the population-based Oporto Centenarian Study (mean age 101.2; SD = 1.6). Main findings revealed that the majority of the centenarians lived at home with their family members (57.9%). Increased health care needs, living alone, and family caregiving constraints were the most common reasons for entering a nursing home. Community-dwelling centenarians were cared for mostly by their children; they were less dependent and in better cognitive health than those who resided in a nursing home. Differences were found in the pattern of health service use according to the centenarians' residence, ability to pay medical expenses, and dependency level. Findings highlight the need for an accurate assessment of caregiving support systems - particularly family intergenerational duties - and of the factors constraining the access and use of health and social services. Policy makers may be guided by the insights gained from this research, and work toward improvement of support options and removal of barriers to service access. (RH)

ISSN: 08959420

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Life at age 100: an international research agenda for centenarian studies; by Daniela S Jopp, Kathrin Boerner, Oscar Ribeiro, Christoph Rott.: Routledge, July-September 2016, pp 133-147.

Journal of Aging and Social Policy, vol 28, no 3, July-September 2016, pp 133-147.

During the past three decades, the number of very old individuals has increased significantly, creating a global demographic challenge with consequences at the individual, family and societal levels. Yet, life in very old age is still poorly understood in terms of its unique characteristics and challenges. Besides specific content areas, very old age represents an understudied field of research. This lack of knowledge may be one reason that the very old also are an underserved population. This special issue of Journal of Aging and Social Policy introduces an international network of three centenarian studies that describe and compare the life circumstances and characteristics of centenarians across Germany, Portugal and the United States. These parallel studies comprehensively assess centenarians' physical, cognitive, social and psychological functioning, to create a knowledge base regarding their capacities and needs. A specific focus lies in the investigation of psychological aspects, social resources and societal or cultural contexts, factors that may contribute to longevity and successful ageing. Determining key characteristics of this very old population and investigating similarities and differences across countries is timely and urgent, both from applied and policy standpoints. (RH)

ISSN: 08959420

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Meeting the needs of the growing very old population: policy implications for a global challenge; by Stephanie Pin, Dario Spini.: Routledge, July-September 2016, pp 218-231.

Journal of Aging and Social Policy, vol 28, no 3, July-September 2016, pp 218-231.

Although very old adults are one of the fastest-growing age groups worldwide, they rarely constitute a targeted group for public policies. Drawing on the results of German, Portuguese and American centenarian studies presented in this special issue of Journal of Aging and Social Policy, the authors highlight major challenges that arise from the increase in this population. They outline several promising approaches for policy makers and professionals to develop evidence-based policies and programs that are tailored to the needs of very old adults and their families. They focus our discussion on three key topics essential to life care: the importance of integrated care to meet the complex care needs of the very old; the balance between formal and informal care; and the development of suitable places for living. Besides more specific measures, the authors propose that policies promoting the social integration of very old adults in their communities would be particularly helpful, as these may benefit not only the very old and their families but also individuals of all ages. They conclude that the development of suitable policies addressing the needs of the very old will benefit from future investigation

of cross-cultural similarities and differences in centenarians' characteristics, available services, as well as life conditions they encounter in communities and in institutional contexts. (RH)

ISSN: 08959420

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Predicting successful aging at one hundred years of age; by Lia Araujo, Oscar Ribeiro, Laetitia Teixeira (et al.): Sage, August 2016, pp 689-709.

Research on Aging, vol 38, no 6, August 2016, pp 689-709.

The present study is based on a multidimensional model of successful ageing. It aims to identify subgroups of centenarians sharing common characteristics in successful ageing profiles, and to determine the role of sociodemographic factors and psychological, social, and economic resources on successful ageing. Eighty centenarians had been interviewed face-to-face in two Portuguese studies: 43 from the Oporto Centenarian Study, and 37 from the Beira Interior Centenarian Study. Cluster analysis was performed to identify distinct groups of successful ageing, and logistic regression models were performed which considered the cluster membership as a dependent covariate. There were two distinct clusters, with 40 centenarians in each, one of them presenting better results in all domains. Male sex and better income adequacy were the best predictors of successful ageing. Results help to identify different patterns of successful ageing and provide greater clarity regarding its correlates, increasing current understanding of its modifiable aspects. (RH)

ISSN: 01640275

From : roa.sagepub.com

Understanding very old age: looking back and thinking forward; by Leonard W Poon, Peter Martin, Bo Hagberg.: Routledge, July-September 2016, pp 208-217.

Journal of Aging and Social Policy, vol 28, no 3, July-September 2016, pp 208-217.

Understanding human development among the oldest old is a sequential building process taking into account building-block data, theories and models from childhood, adulthood and old age toward a new territory of oldest-old survivors who have lived way beyond the average life-span. A central question is whether the oldest-old survivors have developed specific survival techniques and/or protective environments that nurture survival. Or are the oldest old statistical outliers, who, by happenstance, continue to survive further into old age? This commentary provides a historical framework on the papers in this special issue of Journal of Aging and Social Policy that describe challenges confronted by the oldest-old survivors, in order to advance our understanding of survival of the oldest old. A clear understanding of the contributors to longevity could guide public policies toward well-being and life satisfaction among our oldest-old citizens. (RH)

ISSN: 08959420

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Very old age as a global challenge: lessons from an international network of centenarian studies: Special issue; by Daniela S Jopp, Kathrin Boerner, Dario Spini (eds): Routledge, July-September 2016, pp 133-231.

Journal of Aging and Social Policy, vol 28, no 3, July-September 2016, pp 133-231.

This special issue of Journal of Aging and Social Policy introduces three population-based centenarian studies that describe and compare the life circumstances and characteristics of centenarians across Germany, Portugal and the United States. The article on the Oporto Centenarian Study in Portugal looks at differences between community-dwelling centenarians and those living in care homes or nursing homes. The Second Heidelberg Centenarian Study conducted in Germany considers the extent and types of informal help provided by family and friends. That paper demonstrates the important role of children of advanced age, since centenarians without children have less help in everyday life. The Fordham Centenarian Study points to the challenges at very old age for participants living in New York City, and the implications of such challenges for a number of well-being indicators. Two commentaries consider, first, our understanding of very old age, and second, meeting the needs of the growing very old population. (RH)

ISSN: 08959420

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Whom do centenarians rely on for support?: findings from the second Heidelberg Centenarian Study; by Kathrin Boerner, Daniela S Jopp, Min-Kyung S Park, Christoph Rott.: Routledge, July-September 2016, pp 165-186.

Journal of Aging and Social Policy, vol 28, no 3, July-September 2016, pp 165-186.

This paper provides a detailed picture of the sources and types of informal support available to German centenarians, depending on their housing and care arrangements. Participants were 112 centenarians and 96 primary contacts of centenarians enrolled in the population-based Second Heidelberg Centenarian Study. Findings indicate that children of centenarians were their primary source of support in daily life. Those without living children had less help overall. Most frequently reported was help with administrative tasks, regardless of

centenarians' residence or living arrangement. All other types of help (e.g. with activities of daily living and housework) were reported by about one-third and were mostly provided by children; centenarians without children were more likely to have friends or neighbours involved in some of these tasks. The one category reported by a third of the centenarians - regardless of residence, living arrangements, or presence of a child - was help with socialising or companionship. Findings constitute an important step toward identifying and meeting the support needs of centenarians and their families. Policy implications are discussed. (RH)

ISSN: 08959420

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

2015

Normative data for the cognitively intact oldest-old: the Framingham Heart Study; by Ivy N Miller, Jayandra J Himali, Alexa S Beiser, Joanne M Murabito.: Taylor and Francis, July-September 2015, pp 386-409.

Experimental Aging Research, vol 41, no 4, July-September 2015, pp 386-409.

The number of individuals who reach extreme age is increasing. Much of the current literature focuses on impaired cognition in extreme age, and debate continues regarding what constitutes "normal" cognition in extreme age. This study aimed to provide oldest-old normative data, and to compare cognitive performances of cognitively intact older individuals from the Framingham Heart Study. A total of 1302 individuals aged 65+ years from the Framingham Heart Study were separated into 5-year age bands and compared on cognitive tests. Multivariate linear regression analyses were conducted, adjusting for gender, the Wide Range Achievement Test - Third Edition (WRAT-III) Reading score, and cohort. Analyses also included comparisons between 418 individuals aged 80+ and 884 individuals aged 65-79, and comparisons within oldest-old age bands. Normative data for all participants are presented. Significant differences were found on most tests between age groups in the overall analysis between young-old and oldest-old, and analysis of oldest-old age bands also revealed select significant differences (all $ps < .05$). As ageing increases, significant cognitive differences and increased variability in performances are evident. These results support the use of age-appropriate normative data for oldest-old individuals. (RH)

ISSN: 0361073X

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Personality structure among centenarians: the Georgia Centenarian Study; by Adam Davey, Ilene C Siegler, Peter Martin, (et al): Taylor and Francis, July-September 2015, pp 361-385.

Experimental Aging Research, vol 41, no 4, July-September 2015, pp 361-385.

The authors demonstrate that observer-rated factor structure of personality in centenarians is congruent with the normative structure. Prevalence of cognitive impairment, which has previously been linked to changes in personality in younger samples, is high in this age group, requiring observer ratings to obtain valid data in a population-based context. Likewise, the broad range of cognitive functioning necessitates synthesis of results across multiple measures of cognitive performance. Data from 161 participants in the Georgia Centenarian Study (GCS; mean age 100.3 years, 84% women, 20% African American, 40% community-dwelling, and 30% low cognitive functioning) support strong overall correspondence with reference structure (full sample: .94; higher cognitive functioning: .94; lower cognitive functioning: .90). Centenarians with lower cognitive functioning are higher on neuroticism and lower on openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Facet-level differences (higher N1-N6: anxiety, hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, vulnerability to stress; lower E1: warmth; lower O4-O6: actions, ideas, values; lower A1, A3, A4: trust, altruism, compliance; C1, C5: competence, self-discipline) are also observed. Multivariate factor-level models indicate only neuroticism of the five broad factors predicts membership in cognitively impaired group; facet-level models showed that lower-order scales from three of the five domains were significant. Centenarians with higher self-consciousness (N4), impulsiveness (N5), and deliberation (C6) but lower ideas (O5), compliance (A4), and self-discipline (C5) were more likely to be in the lower cognitive functioning category. Results present first normative population-based data for personality structure in centenarians, and offer intriguing possibilities for the role of personality in cognitive impairment centred on neuroticism.

ISSN: 0361073X

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

2014

Suicide in centenarians: the international landscape; by Ajit Shah, Sofia Zarate-Escudero, Ravi Bhat ... (et al).: Cambridge University Press, October 2014, pp 1703-1708.

International Psychogeriatrics, vol 26, no 10, October 2014, pp 1703-1708.

Increased life expectancy worldwide has led to an increase in the number of centenarians and their numbers are predicted to increase further. However little is known about suicide rates in this group. In the present study data on the number of suicides in centenarians of both genders for as many years as possible from 2000 were ascertained from three sources: colleagues, national statistics office websites and e-mail contact with the national statistics offices of as many countries as possible. The number of centenarians for the corresponding years was estimated for each country using data provided by the United Nations website. Data were available from 17 countries. The suicide rate was 57 per 100,000 person years in men and 6.8 per 100,000 person years in women. Suicide rates were sufficiently large amongst centenarians for there to constitute a public health concern given the anticipated rise in the centenarian population and the paucity of data on risk and protective factors for suicide in this age group. (JL)

ISSN: 10416102

From : www.journals.cambridge.org

2013

Cardiovascular diseases are largely underreported in Danish centenarians; by Karen Andersen-Ranberg, Kaare T Fjederholt, Adnan Madzak (et al).: Oxford University Press, March 2013, pp 249-253.

Age and Ageing, vol 42, no 2, March 2013, pp 249-253.

The substantial decline in oldest old mortality has led to more people surviving to very old age. As morbidity and disability generally increases with age epidemiological research in ageing has focused on the health of oldest olds. However most studies are based on self-reported or physician-reported information and not objective health information. The objective of the present study was to estimate and compare the prevalence of cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) in Danish centenarians using three different sources of information: self-reported, physician-reported and objective data. The research used the population-based clinical-epidemiological study of 100-year-old Danes. All eligible participants were interviewed (self-report) in their own homes and offered a clinical examination, including an electrocardiogram (ECG) and blood pressure measurement. Further health information was retrieved from general practitioners' medical files and the Danish National Discharge Register (physician report). Out of 276 eligible, 207 (75%) participated. Blood pressure and ECG were measured in 76 and 69%, respectively. There was poor agreement between self-reported and physician-reported CVDs, and between physician-reported CVDs and clinical objective CVD diagnoses. Only angina pectoris reached a Kappa value of 0.5. ECG revealed twice as many cases of myocardial infarction and ischaemia compared with physician-reported. Using both physician-reported and ECG 95 (46%) of the centenarians suffered from at least one of the diseases myocardial infarction, angina pectoris or atrial fibrillation. Adding physician-reported heart failure and hypertension increased the prevalence of CVD to 80%. The study concludes that self-reported information largely underestimates the CVD life-time prevalence in Danish centenarians. Objective clinical examinations are necessary to evaluate true disease prevalence in the oldest old. (JL)

ISSN: 00020729

From : www.ageing.oxfordjournals.org

In search of quality of life for a practical centenarian and his artistic wife; by Annie Stevenson.: Emerald, 2013, pp 270-275.

Quality in Ageing and Older Adults, vol 14 no 4, 2013, pp 270-275.

If society would accept that we all need to live our lives as we wish until the end and to value those who assist us to do this, then frailty in old age need not be feared and abhorred. This case study highlights the importance of empowering and meeting the "higher needs" of the very old, which prolong a fulfilling life. With the right attitudes to ageing and death, and with the appropriate investment for a seamless care system that listens to and functions well for those who need it, old age should be as enriching as any other time in life. The author presents a personal narrative of her parents and the challenges they face in very old age. The professional and personal experiences of the author as she tackles the obstacles to support them are drawn from her career in social care with memories from diaries written, as she accompanies her parents on their journey of physical and mental deterioration, along with a quest for realising what they have and making the most of it. Given how challenging this journey is for an informed family, the implications are that in 2013, our "civilised" society still misunderstands the special and complex needs of frail older people, devalues them, and writes them off with institutionalised, rigid attitudes and services instead of working creatively to improve their lives. The paper

observes how deeply rooted this is in us all. The combination of the author's background in social work and expertise in health and care with living so close to relatively unusually long-lived parents, offers a unique insight into why it is so challenging to achieve quality of life for very old people needing care. The article should be of interest to clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), social services departments, older people's care providers, and carer and user organisations. (RH)

ISSN: 14717794

From : www.emeraldinsight.com/qaoa.htm

Profiles of cognitive functioning in a population-based sample of centenarians using factor mixture analysis; by Adam Davey, Ting Dai, John L Woodard (et al): Taylor & Francis, March-April 2013, pp 125-144.

Experimental Aging Research, vol 39, no 2, March-April 2013, pp 125-144.

The goal of the study was to identify and characterize latent profiles (clusters) of cognitive functioning in centenarians and the psychometric properties of cognitive measures within them. Data were collected from a cross-sectional, population-based sample of 244 centenarians (aged 98 to 108, 15.8% men, 20.5% African American, 38% community-dwelling) from 44 counties in northern Georgia participating in the Georgia Centenarian Study (2001-2008). Measures included the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE), Severe Impairment Battery (SIB), Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-III Similarities subtest (WAIS), Hand Tapping, Behavioral Dyscontrol Scale (BDS), Controlled Oral Word Association Test (COWAT), and Fuld Object Memory Evaluation (FOME). The Global Deterioration Rating Scale (GDRS) was used to independently evaluate criterion-related validity for distinguishing cognitively normal and impaired groups. Relevant covariates included directly assessed functional status for basic and instrumental activities of daily living (ADLs), race, gender, educational attainment, Geriatric Depression Scale Short Form (GDS-SF), and vision and hearing problems. Results suggest two distinct classes of cognitive performance in this centenarian sample. Approximately one third of the centenarians show a pattern of markedly lower cognitive performance on most measures. Group membership is independently well predicted (area under the curve [AUC] = .83) by GDRS scores (sensitivity 67.7%, specificity 82.4%). Membership in the lower cognitive performance group was more likely for individuals who were older, African Americans, had more depressive symptoms, lower plasma folate, carriers of the apolipoprotein E (APOE) e4 allele, facility residents, and individuals who died in the 2 years following interview. In a population expected to have high prevalence of dementia, latent subtypes can be distinguished via factor mixture analysis that provide normative values for cognitive functioning. The present study allows estimates for normative cognitive performance in this age group. (RH)

ISSN: 0361073X

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Regional longevity: a Chinese case study; by International Expert Committee on Population Ageing and Longevity Secretariat. Valletta, Malta: International Institute on Ageing (United Nations - Malta), November 2013, pp 2-11.

Bold, vol 24, no 1, November 2013, pp 2-11.

This study looks at the geographical environment of typical longevity regions in China. It shows that the distribution of centenarians in China is centralised. Along the North-South climate dividing line, it is concentrated in bands to the south, particularly those along the Yangtze River basin and the Pearl River basin and delta region. Drinking water in these typical regions is weak alkaline, and the Se, Fe and K content is appropriate. Ca, Co and Mn content is high while that of Cr and Ca is low. In centenarians' hair, it is rich in Li, Mg, Mn, Ca, Zn and poor in Cd, Cr, Cu, Ni. Mg, Ca, Mn content in longevity regions is higher than in non-longevity regions, while Cr, Cd, Cu content is lower in longevity regions. Health and longevity also benefit from favourable social environment factors such as positive psychological states and bland diets with a high proportion of vegetables. All this shows that the distribution of people living longer relates to the combined effect of both the natural and human environment. The index of regional population longevity (IRPL) is an appropriate quantitative indicator for comparative study in longevity regions. (JL)

ISSN: 10165177

From : <http://www.inia.org.mt>

The Sydney Centenarian Study: methodology and profile of centenarians and near-centenarians; by Perminder S Sachdev, Charlene Livitan, John Crawford ... (et al): Cambridge University Press, June 2013, pp 993-1005.

International Psychogeriatrics, vol 25, no 6, June 2013, pp 993-1005.

There are few population-based studies of centenarians and near-centenarians internationally and none in Australia to date. In the present study individuals 95 years and older were recruited from seven electoral districts in Sydney using the electoral roll, Medicare lists and multiple other strategies to obtain a representative sample. Physical and mental health and cognitive status were assessed using standard instruments in multiple sessions, with assessments individually adapted. An informant was interviewed and participants were invited to donate a

blood sample, undergo an MRI scan and enrol into the brain donation programme. This study reports on preliminary data on the first 200 participants. Mean age of the sample was 97.4 years (range 95-106), with 29.5% being men and 58.5% living in a private dwelling. Rates of heart disease and diabetes were lower than in octogenarians, but hearing and visual deficits were common. The mean mini-mental state examination (MMSE) score was 21.1, with men performing better. Rates of psychological distress were low and satisfaction with life high (mean 5.91 out of a maximum of 7); 54% scored below 24 on MMSE; 39.5% were impaired on both MMSE and a functional measure; 20% had a previous diagnosis of dementia. This is a preliminary report describing the methodology of the study. It provides further evidence that dementia is not inevitable at this age and independent living is common. The study provides an excellent resource to determine the genetic and environmental contributions to long and successful cognitive ageing. (JL)

ISSN: 10416102

From : journals.cambridge.org/ipg

2012

Drug use in centenarians compared with nonagenarians and octogenarians in Sweden: a nationwide register-based study; by Jonas W Wastesson, Marti G Parker, Johan Fastbom ... (et al).

Age and Ageing, vol 41, no 2, March 2012, pp 218-224.

The number of centenarians increases rapidly, however little is known about their health and use of medications. The present study aimed to investigate pharmacological drug use in community-dwelling and institutionalised centenarians compared with nonagenarians and octogenarians. Data were analysed on dispensed drugs for centenarians, nonagenarians and octogenarians from the Swedish Prescribed Drug Register, record-linked to the Swedish Social Services Register. Multivariate logistic regression analysis was used to analyse whether age was associated with use of drugs, after adjustment for sex, living situation and co-morbidity. In the adjusted analysis, centenarians were more likely to use analgesics, hypnotics/sedatives and anxiolytics, but less likely to use antidepressants than nonagenarians and octogenarians. Moreover, centenarians were more likely to use high-ceiling diuretics, but less likely to use beta-blockers and ACE-inhibitors. The findings suggest that centenarians' high use of analgesics, hypnotics/sedatives and anxiolytics either reflects a palliative approach to drug treatment in this age group or that pain and mental health problems increase into extreme old age. Also centenarians do not seem to be prescribed cardiovascular drug therapy according to guidelines to the same extent as nonagenarians and octogenarians. Whether this reflects an age or cohort effect should be evaluated in longitudinal studies. (JL)

ISSN: 00020729

From : <http://ageing.oxfordjournals.org/http://www.bgs.org.uk/>

Making sense of extreme longevity: explorations into the spiritual lives of centenarians; by Lydia K Manning, Jessie A Leek, M Elise Radina.

Journal of Religion, Spirituality and Aging, vol 24, no 4, 2012, pp 345-359.

As older adults live into advanced age the oldest-old segment will continue to increase in number. In this study the authors analysed data gathered using in-depth interviewing in order to explore the spiritual and religious lives of 16 centenarians. Results showed the importance that spirituality has for older adults, particularly those in advanced age. Spirituality and religion were found to be a key factor of support, an important resource in later life, and maintained continuity over the life course for the centenarians. The findings support the need for researchers and practitioners to consider the importance of spirituality in later life, particularly for those in their last decades. (JL)

ISSN: 15528030

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Morbidity profiles and lifetime health of Australian centenarians; by Robyn L Richmond, Jenaleen Law, Frances KayLambkin.: Wiley-Blackwell, December 2012, pp 227-232.

Australasian Journal on Ageing, vol 31, no 4, December 2012, pp 227-232.

The aim of this descriptive study was to examine the lifetime prevalence and initial onset of diseases among centenarians. 188 participants aged 100 or more were given structured questionnaires concerning the presence and timing of 14 common age-related diseases. The most common conditions were ocular disease (70%), arthritis (58%) and hypertension (40%). Average age at disease onset was 80 years, and average number of comorbidities was three. Participants were characterised into three morbidity profiles _ survivors (46%), delayers (34%) and escapers (19%). No participants had a diagnosis of dementia or osteoporosis before age 80 years. Overall results showed that relative to the general population, a select sample of Australian centenarians reported lower rates of chronic conditions, with many escaping osteoporosis, dementia, cardiovascular disease,

respiratory illnesses, cancers, anxiety and depression. Increasing age was correlated with increasing morbidity but a few centenarians reached 100 years of age without disease. (JL)

ISSN: 14406381

From : wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/ajag

2011

Living beyond 100: executive summary; by Valentina Serra, Jessica Watson, David Sinclair (et al), International Longevity Centre UK - ILC-UK. London: International Longevity Centre UK - ILC-UK, November 2011, 15 pp.

The policy implications of the growing centenarian population are considered. This summary of a report published with support from Age UK also examines the demography; health and need for social care; housing and wealth; and quality of life for this group. The work is guided by four key questions. How large is the current UK centenarian population and how much is this expected to grow? How does the health of centenarians compare to that of younger age cohorts and how is this expected to change? What are the housing circumstances of the centenarian population and what are the other distinctive socioeconomic characteristics of centenarians? What are the key components of quality of life for centenarians and how does the quality of life of centenarians compare with other age cohorts? Gaps in the evidence base are identified, and key policy recommendations to address the issues raised are proposed. (RH)

From : ILC-UK, 11 Tufton Street, London SW1P 3QB. Download also available; see:

http://www.ilcuk.org.uk/index.php/publications/publication_details/living_beyond_100_a_report_on_centenarians

2010

Depression and hypertension among Chinese nonagenarians and centenarians; by Zhao Wen, Dong Bi-Rong, Huang Chang-Quan (et al).

International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, vol 25, no 6, June 2010, pp 554-561.

In this cross-sectional study, the authors explored the association between hypertension and depression in the very old using a sample ranged in age from 90 to 108 years. The sample included 687 unrelated Chinese nonagenarians and centenarians (67.4% women, mean age 93.51 years). The mean depression score (measured with brief 23-item geriatrics depression scale Chinese-edition (GDS-CD)) was 8.46 (standard deviation (SD) 3.33 range 0-20). There was no significant difference in depression scores between subjects with and without hypertension and there was also no significant difference in depression prevalence between subjects with and without hypertension. There was no significant difference in prevalence of hypertension between subjects with and without depression and there were also no significant differences in levels of arterial blood pressure (including SBP and DBP). Neither odd ratio (OR) of depression as a function of increased hypertension nor OR of hypertension as a function of increased depression was significant. In summary, depression was not directly correlated with hypertension among Chinese nonagenarians and centenarians. (KJ/RH)

ISSN: 08856230

From : [http://www.interscience.wiley.com/journal/gpsDOI: 10.1002/gps.2364](http://www.interscience.wiley.com/journal/gpsDOI:10.1002/gps.2364)

Depression in relation to purpose in life among a very old population: a five-year follow-up study; by Pia Hedberg, Yngve Gustafson, Lena Alex (et al): Taylor & Francis, August 2010, pp 757-763.

Aging & Mental Health, vol 14, no 6, August 2010, pp 757-763.

A cross-sectional study of 189 participants (120 women and 69 men) aged 85-103 years living in a county in northern Sweden investigated the relationship between purpose in life and depression. In a five-year follow-up, the study also investigated whether purpose in life, adjusted for different background characteristics, can prevent very old men and women from developing depression. Those who had not been diagnosed as depressed at baseline (n = 78) were included in the five-year follow-up study. Depression was assessed using the Geriatric Depression Scale-15 (GDS-15), the Organic Brain Syndrome scale, the Montgomery-Asberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS), and Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV criteria (DSM-IV). Purpose in life was assessed with the Purpose in Life (PIL) scale. In the cross-sectional study, 40 participants out of 189 (21.2%) were depressed, and those with depression had significantly lower PIL scores (mean score 107 vs. 99, p = 0.014). In the follow-up study, 78 persons were available for the assessment of depression. Of those, 21 (26.9%) were diagnosed as depressed and their mean PIL score at baseline was 106 (SD = 17.4) versus 108 (SD = 16.0, p = 0.750) among those not depressed. Using multivariate logistic regression analysis controlling for possible confounders, the authors found no association between purpose in life and the risk of developing depression after five years (OR = 1.0, 95% CI 0.97-1.03). The results show a significant inverse relationship

between purpose in life and depression in the cross-sectional study; however, a high PIL score does not seem to serve very old people as a protection against the risk of developing depression. (KJ/RH)

ISSN: 13607863

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Experiences of loneliness among the very old: the Umeå 85+ project; by Ulla H Graneheim, Berit Lundman.: Taylor & Francis, May 2010, pp 433-438.

Aging & Mental Health, vol 14, no 4, May 2010, pp 433-438.

This study aims to elucidate experiences of loneliness among the very old, who live alone. Twenty-three women and seven men, aged 85-103 years, were interviewed about their experiences of loneliness. The text was subjected to qualitative content analysis. The descriptions of loneliness were twofold: on the one hand, living with losses and feeling abandoned represented the limitations imposed by loneliness; and on the other, living in confidence and feeling free represented the opportunities of loneliness. The findings indicate that experiences of loneliness among the very old are complex, and concern their relationships in the past, the present, and the future. Experiences of loneliness among the very old can be devastating or enriching, depending upon life circumstances and outlook on life and death. The authors interpreted these two aspects of loneliness as feelings of homelessness and at-homeness. (KJ/RH)

ISSN: 13607863

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Reflections of men and women in advanced old age on being the other sex; by Lena Aléx, Berit Lundman, Anne Hammarström.

Ageing and Society, vol 30, part 2, February 2010, pp 193-206.

The study reported in this paper is part of the Umeå 85+ project in Sweden. The aim was to investigate gender perspectives among 'the oldest old', by asking men and women in advanced old age living in a sparsely populated area of northern Sweden to reflect on how life might have been if they had been born the other sex. Thematic narratives from nine men and seven women were analysed using qualitative content analysis. The content of these narratives was resolved into eight categories in two domains, respectively men's and women's reflections about being born the opposite sex. The narratives of both the men and women indicated that they were satisfied with their actual birth sex. The men were aware that if they had been born female, they would probably have experienced more hard work and had a more restricted life, and they were conscious of both women's relative powerlessness and their greater ability to manage and organise work within the home. The women's narratives described a femininity characterised by longing for a state of being unconcerned when young, and their narratives also displayed awareness of women's physical strength and that men's lives had also been hard. (KJ/RH)

ISSN: 0144686X

From : <http://www.journals.cambridge.org/asodoi:10.1017/S0144686X09990377>

Storytelling reveals the active, positive lives of centenarians; by Tina Koch.

Nursing Older People, vol 22, no 8, October 2010, pp 31-36.

The study aimed to present alternative stories of ageing that countered the prevailing negative stereotypes of older people by interviewing centenarians about their lives. Sixteen healthy UK centenarian volunteers were interviewed in their places of residence. The participants talked about living as independently as possible, their continuing growth and development and their ongoing close relationships. Difficulties and loss were considered to be 'part of life' indicated by comments such as: 'accept whatever life brings', 'just plod on', 'do whatever you can to make things better and then move on'. In conclusion the centenarians presented a positive picture of ageing which counteracts negative stereotypes. (JL)

ISSN: 14720795

From : <http://www.nursingolderpeople.co.uk>

2009

Correspondence of perceptions about centenarians' mental health; by Maurice MacDonald, Peter Martin, Jennifer Margrett (et al.): Taylor & Francis, November 2009, pp 827-837.

Aging & Mental Health, vol 13, no 6, November 2009, pp 827-837.

The goals of this study were to uncover the criteria by which centenarians, caregivers or proxies, and interviewers rated centenarians' mental health. Often proxy and interviewer reports are obtained in studies of the oldest-old and become a primary source of information. Data were from a population-based sample of mentally competent US centenarians in northern Georgia. The dependent variables were based on alternative reports for the centenarians' mental or emotional health. Regression analysis was used to predict each source's rating of

mental health separately with the same set of variables. These variables included information obtained from the centenarians and proxies about their distal experiences, demographics, and proximal resources including Mini-Mental Status Examination (MMSE), health, personality, socioeconomic resources, and coping behaviours. Examination of mean-level differences between sources revealed similarity across mental health ratings. For centenarians and proxies, perceived economic status was a very important predictor of mental health. For centenarians and interviewers, personality (neuroticism and extraversion) was an important common predictor. The interviewer and proxy mental health ratings were strongly associated with MMSE, but that was not the case for centenarians. Mean-level findings and the comparative regression results provide corroborating evidence that centenarians' self-reports of mental health are similar based on average ratings and presence of common associations with other raters (i.e. perceived economic status and personality). Implications of differences across rater pairs are discussed as guidance about the comparative value of substitution of proxies as informants for addressing specific influences on mental health. (KJ/RH)

ISSN: 13607863

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Experiences of purpose in life when becoming and being a very old woman; by Pia Hedberg, Christine Brulin, Lena Aléx.

Journal of Women & Aging, vol 21, no 2, 2009, pp 125-137.

The aim of the study was to illuminate how very old women describe their experiences of purpose in life (PIL) in narratives about becoming and being very old. Participants comprised 30 women selected from 120 women who had answered the PIL test and had been interviewed about their experiences of being very old as part of the Umeå 85+ study in northern Sweden. The interviews were analysed with qualitative content analysis, which revealed four themes: having a positive view of life, living in relation to God, having meaningful activities, and simply existing. The findings show that very old women experience purpose in life both in their daily activities and in their contact with a spiritual world. It seems to be facilitated by a positive view of life. Although the results were dominated by a positive view of life, some of the participants saw their lives in terms of simply existing and did not experience purpose in life. (KJ/RH)

ISSN: 08952841

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

International colloquium on the oldest old (80+) with focus on health and care-giving ..., Thiruvananthapuram, India, February 9 - 11, 2009: conclusions, suggestions, recommendations and policy implications; by International Colloquium on the Oldest Old (80+), 2009; Centre for Gerontological Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, India. Thiruvananthapuram, India: Centre for Gerontological Studies - CGS, 2009, 12 pp. The oldest old (80 years and over) is the fastest growing segment of the world's older (age 60+) population, constituting 89.3 million or 13% of the 60+ population. By 2050, it is projected that 394 million (20% of those aged 60+) will be aged 80+. The International Colloquium on the Oldest Old (80+) is the first ever such global conference; it was organised by the Centre for Gerontological Studies (CGS), Thiruvananthapuram and co-sponsored by the Government of Kerala and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This document outlines the themes of the symposia and technical sessions, variously on health, social dynamics, care and care-giving, support systems, and needs of the oldest old. Conclusions and suggestions cover: demography, family, economic aspects, health care aspects, eighty-plus women, old age homes, empowering the oldest old, crimes against elderly, and research. Recommendations made were: treat the 80+ as a special category; ensure family support; provide community level support; improve medical care; empower the oldest old; open up geriatric homes; training for care givers; ensure special care for oldest old women; compile data on the oldest old; and undertake research and evaluation studies. (RH)

From : http://www.cgsindia.org/Colloquium_Report.pdf

The prevalence of disability in the oldest-old is high and continues to increase with age: findings from The 90+ Study; by Daniel J Berlau, María M Corrada, Claudia Kawas.

International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, vol 24, no 11, November 2009, pp 1217-1225.

The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence and type of disability in the oldest-old (90+), the fastest growing age group in the United States. The current study included functional data on 697 participants from The 90+ Study, a population-based longitudinal study of ageing and dementia in people aged 90 and older (who are survivors of the Leisure World Cohort Study). Data were obtained by participant's informants via a written questionnaire. The prevalence of disability was calculated for two definitions using activities of daily living (ADLs). ADL difficulty was defined as difficulty with one or more ADLs, whereas ADL dependency was defined as needing help on one or more ADLs. ADL difficulty was present in 71% in 90-94 year olds, 89% in 95-99 year olds, and 97% in centenarians. ADL dependency was present in 44% of 90-94 year olds, 66% of 95-99 year olds, and 92% of centenarians. The ADL most commonly causing difficulty was walking (70%)

whereas the ADL most commonly causing dependency was bathing (51%). Age, gender, and institutionalisation were significantly associated with both ADL difficulty and ADL dependency. Similar to studies in younger individuals, the current study suggests that the prevalence of disability continues to increase rapidly in people aged 90 and older. With the rapid growth in the number of people in this age group, disability in the oldest-old has major public health implications. (KJ/RH)

ISSN: 08856230

From : <http://www.interscience.wiley.com/journal/gps>

2008

Estimating the changing population of the 'oldest old'; by Ercilla Dini, Shayla Goldring.

Population Trends, no 132, Summer 2008, pp 8-16.

The population of England Wales is becoming older. This poses an increasing demand for detailed data on the size and trends of the population at the oldest ages. Using the recently released Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates of the population aged 90 and over in England and Wales, this article shows trends in the population of the oldest old and demographic causes of the rapid increase in centenarians during the twentieth century. It also presents further validation of the ONS estimates of the oldest old with estimates from other data sources. (KJ/RH)

ISSN: 03074463

From : <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>

Genetic and environmental determinants of healthy aging: insights from exceptional survivors around the globe; by Bradley J Willcox, D Craig Willcox, Luigi Ferrucci (eds).

Journals of Gerontology: Series A, Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences, vol 63A, no 11, November 2008, pp 1181-1240 (Special section).

This section of the journal is a collection of eight articles from an assortment of international perspectives that consider factors of healthy ageing that contribute to human longevity. The population groups under scrutiny are American, Danish, Japanese, and Swedish. Discovering protective genetic or environmental factors that enhance healthy ageing and translating these findings into evidence-based interventions is "becoming a research priority". It is noted that much progress has been made in the past four decades, with the ability to travel and study "exceptional survivor" population groups which appear to occur in certain regions e.g. Okinawa and Sardinia. Modern centenarian studies are now beginning to emerge, and this section contributes a novel study on the Okinawa supercentenarians. (KJ/RH)

ISSN: 10795006

From : <http://www.geron.org>

The oldest old in England and Wales: a descriptive analysis based on the MRC Cognitive Function and Ageing Study; by Jing Xie, Fiona E Mthews, Carol Jagger (et al).

Age and Ageing, vol 37, no 4, July 2008, pp 396-402.

The characteristics and survival of the oldest old in England and Wales are described, using data from the Medical Research Council Cognitive Function and Ageing Study (MRC CFAS), based on two rural and three urban sites. In total, 958 individuals aged 90+ and 24 aged 100+, had been interviewed at least once during the study. 27% were living in residential or nursing homes. Women aged 90+ were more likely to be living in residential and nursing homes, be widowed, have any disability, or have lower Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE) scores. The centenarians were mostly cognitively or functionally impaired. The median survival times for those reaching their 90th (n=2,336), 95th (n=638) or 100th birthday (n=92) during the study were 3.7 years, 2.3 years and 2.1 years for women, and 2.9 years, 2 years and 2.2 years for men, respectively. Those living in residential and nursing homes had a shorter survival when aged 90, with similar non-significant effects for those aged 95 and 100. After age 100, the high mortality rate and small sample size limited the ability to detect any differences between the different groups. Even at the very earliest ages, most were living in non-institutionalised settings. Among the oldest old, women were frailer than men. Being male and living in residential nursing homes shortened survival in those aged 90+. (RH)

ISSN: 00020729

From : <http://www.ageing.oupjournals.org>

They really are that old: a validation study of centenarian prevalence in Okinawa; by D Craig Willcox, Bradley J Willcox, Qimei He (et al).

Journals of Gerontology: Series A, Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences, vol 63A, no 4, April 2008, pp 338-349.

Long lived individuals, such as centenarians, may harbour genetic or environmental advantages important for healthy ageing. Whilst populations with high prevalence of such individuals offer fertile ground for such research, precise phenotypes are required, particularly accurate age. Okinawa has among the world's highest reported prevalence of centenarians. The authors performed a comprehensive age validation of a subset (8%) of the total centenarian population and assessed the reliability of the age registration system. Self-reported age was validated with several common methods and found to correlate well with documented age. Demographic methods, including assessment of age heaping, maximum age at death, centenarian proportions, and male to female ratios of centenarians indicate that the age registration system is reliable. The high reported prevalence of centenarians in Okinawa is valid and merits further study for its genetic and environmental correlates. (RH)

ISSN: 10795006

From : <http://www.geron.org>

2007

Depression in the oldest old in urban and rural municipalities; by E Bergdahl, P Allard, B Lundman (et al): Taylor & Francis, September 2007, pp 570-578.

Aging & Mental Health, vol 11, no 5, September 2007, pp 570-578.

In this cross-sectional study in five depopulated areas and one expanding city in northern Sweden, 363 participants aged 85+ were evaluated for depression. Data were collected from structured interviews and assessments and from relatives, caregivers and medical charts. Depression was screened using the Geriatric Depression Scale - 15 (GDS-15) and evaluated by the Montgomery-Asberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS). 29% of the participants were depressed (34% in the rural areas, 27% in the city). 51% versus 69% were receiving treatment with antidepressants. In the rural areas, those with depression were less frequently treated with selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitor (SSRI) medications (36% vs 65%); instead there were participants treated with tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) (10% vs 0%). A larger proportion of the participants in the urban sample had responded to treatment (59% vs 27%). Depression in old age appears to be a common cause of emotional suffering in the oldest old. In the rural areas, depression was more often inadequately treated and it was also treated with inappropriate medications. (RH)

ISSN: 13607863

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

A health profile of community-living nonagenarians in Canada; by Andrew V Wister, Deanna Wanless.

Canadian Journal on Aging, vol 26, no 1, Spring 2007, pp 1-18.

Due to increasing life expectancy over time, those who live into their nineties - known as nonagenarians - are an important and growing segment of the Canadian population. In 2001, there were 130325 nonagenarians (compared to 3795 centenarians), and it is estimated that they will top 400000 by 2026. This paper provides a health profile and an exploratory analysis of selected social determinants of health for community-living nonagenarians, using the 2001 Canadian Community Health Survey (Statistics Canada, 2003). Perceived health, a selection of prevalent chronic illnesses, and several health behaviours are examined. One dominant pattern is the tendency for male nonagenarians to be in better health than their female counterparts. This finding is consistent with research on centenarians and is discussed in terms of a mortality selection effect. Other key findings include the strength of sense of belonging, income, and physical activity as potential social determinants of health, connected to particular dimensions of health status. (RH)

ISSN: 07149808

From : <http://www.utpjournals.com>

I'm on my way: the meaning of being oldest old, as narrated by people aged 95 and over; by Regina Santamaki Fischer, Astrid Norberg, Berit Lundman. Binghamton, NY

Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging, vol 19, no 2, 2007, pp 3-20.

A phenomenological hermeneutic analysis of interviews was performed to uncover the meaning of the lived experience of being oldest old. 12 people aged between 95 and 103 from the Umeå 85+ Study sample in Northern Sweden were interviewed. Two themes were formulated, the first - being in stillness and in movement - involves being in one's aged body, unable to move and being in the stillness of the inner person occupied with an inner movement of remembering and reconciling with life. The second - being at the threshold and being ready to let go - implies being at peace with God and feeling confidence, despite the anxiety of dying. A

comprehensive understanding was formulated based on Gabriel Marcel's thoughts on hope, in terms of which, to the oldest old means living in hope and being on the move. (RH)

ISSN: 15528030

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Living amidst consolation in the presence of God perceptions of consolation among the oldest old: the Umeå 85+ study; by Regina Santamäki Fishcer, Björn Nygren, Berit Lundman (et al). Binghamton, NY

Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging, vol 19, no 3, 2007, pp 3-20.

As part of the Umeå 85+ Study in Northern Sweden, this study describes how people aged 90+ perceive consolation. Qualitative content analysis of 49 interviews revealed four categories which were present in two themes: consolation by God; consolation from others; consolation from self; and consolation from things. The themes "Living amidst consolation in the presence of God" was a core theme, and expresses consolation as self-evident and based on a relation to God, others, self and things. The theme "Seeking consolation", expresses consolation from self, others, things, or God. In some cases, interviewees regretted that they had no religious faith. Reasonably, most interviewees referred to religious consolation, as religion had been so closely connected with the word "consolation" all their lives. (RH)

ISSN: 15528030

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Neurocognition of centenarians: neuropsychological study of elite centenarians; by E Luczywek, T Gabryelewicz, A Barczak (et al).

International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, vol 22, no 10, October 2007, pp 1004-1008.

In this Polish study, 10 centenarians and a reference group of 20 people who started ageing (65 years) were examined with a sensitive set of neuropsychological tests and tasks in clinical-experimental assessment. As expected, the centenarians' cognitive functions differed from those of the subjects who started ageing, but not in all aspects. For instance, the former scored significantly lower in the area of linguistic function but the ability to plan and perform controlled complex visuospatial tasks with use of simultaneous and sequential strategies was preserved despite unfavourable symptoms of natural ageing such as performance attention as well as prolonged action time. The results suggest that the centenarians studied show a dominant right-hemispheric pattern functioning not only in relation to perception, but also in planning and executing complex activities. The study and description of preserved neurocognition was possible due to introducing a special procedure sensitive to the preserved functions. (RH)

ISSN: 08856230

From : <http://www.interscience.wiley.com>

Socioeconomic differentials in mortality among the oldest old in China; by Haiyan Zhu, Yu Xie.

Research on Aging, vol 29, no 2, March 2007, pp 125-143.

Although an inverse relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and mortality has been well documented for many populations throughout the world, it remains unclear whether this relationship holds true for the oldest old. Most notably, some scholars have suggested that the relationship may disappear at the oldest ages. Using data from the 1998, 2000 and 2002 waves of the Chinese Longitudinal Healthy Longevity Survey, this study examined the relationship between SES and mortality among the oldest old population (age 80+) in China. The results show continuing prevalence of SES differentials in mortality - higher SES is significantly associated with lower mortality risks - among the oldest old in China. The authors further show that the relationship holds regardless of how the oldest old are operationalised at 80 years and older, 90 years and older, or 100 years and older. (RH)

ISSN: 01640275

Survival of parents and siblings of supercentenarians; by Thomas Perls, Iliana V Kohler, Stacy Andersen (et al). Journals of Gerontology: Series A, Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences, vol 62A, no 9, September 2007, pp 1028-1035.

Given previous evidence of familial predisposition for longevity, it was hypothesised that the siblings and parents of supercentenarians (those aged 110+) were predisposed to survive to very old age, and that relative to their birth cohorts, their relative survival probabilities (RSPs) are even higher than what has been observed for the siblings of centenarians. Mean age at death conditional upon survival to ages 20 and 50 and survival probabilities from ages 20 and 50 to higher ages were determined for 50 male and 56 female siblings and 54 parents of 29 supercentenarians. These estimates were contrasted with comparable estimates based on birth cohort-specific mortality experience for the US and Sweden. Conditional on survival to age 20, mean age at death of supercentenarians' siblings was 81 years for men and women. Compared with respective Swedish and US birth cohorts, these estimates were 17% to 20% (12-14 years) higher for the brothers and 11%-14% (8-10

years) higher for the sisters. Sisters had a 2.9 times greater probability and brothers had a 4.3 greater probability of survival from age 20 to age 90. Mothers of supercentenarians had a 5.8 times greater probability of surviving from age 50 to age 90. Fathers also experienced an increased survival probability from age 50 to age 90 of 2.7, but it failed to attain statistical significance. The RSPs of siblings and mothers of supercentenarians revealed a substantial survival advantage and were most pronounced at the oldest ages. The RSP to age 90 in siblings of supercentenarians was approximately the same as that reported for siblings of centenarians. It is possible that greater RSPs are observed for reaching even higher ages such as 100 years, but a larger sample of supercentenarians and their siblings and parents is needed to investigate this possibility. (RH)

ISSN: 10795006

From : <http://www.geron.org>

2006

Dementia-free survival among centenarians: an evidence-based review; by James F Calvert Jr, Joyce Hollander-Rodriguez, Jeffrey Kaye (et al).

Journals of Gerontology: Series A, Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences, vol 61A, no 9, September 2006, pp 951-956.

The 2000 US Census identified 50154 Americans aged 100+ (18 per 100000). Increased longevity is not only of benefit if accompanied by the maintenance of physical, social and cognitive functions into advanced age. This review identifies research describing prevalence of dementia free-survival in centenarians. 650 publications were reviewed that described the prevalence of dementia in centenarians, were community-based, had data that were specific to people aged 100+, and were published in peer-reviewed journals. For each study, the authors identified the prevalence of dementia, the completeness of the sample, the number of study participants, the method used to diagnose dementia, and the duration of the study. 20 research groups from 14 countries were identified with publications meeting the search criteria. The studies showed substantial variation in methods of assessing cognitive status, assuring a complete cohort and sample size. Few studies reported longitudinal data or attempted diagnosis of the cause of dementia. Indicative of the variation found in the research reviewed is that prevalence of dementia-free survival at age 100 varied between 0% and 50%. (RH)

ISSN: 10795006

From : <http://www.geron.org>

Handgrip strength among nonagenarians and centenarians in three European regions; by Bernard Jeune, Axel Skytthe, Amandine Cournil (et al).

Journals of Gerontology: Series A, Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences, vol 61A, no 7, July 2006, pp 707-712.

Handgrip strength is an important predictor of disability and mortality in older people. In this sub-study of the European Challenge for Healthy Ageing project, only the long-lived probands were included. The maximum value of three measurements of handgrip strength was selected for the analysis. Among 598 very old people (median age 98), a clear north-south gradient was observed. For men, handgrip strength dropped (from 24.2kg in southern Denmark to 20.8kg in Languedoc-Roussillon, France, and 14.2kg in Calabria, Italy), whereas for women the drop was smaller (from 12.2 to 9.2kg). The difference remains significant after adjustment for age, gender, housing, knee height, activity of daily living (ADL) scale score, score on the 6-item Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE), chair stand, and number of age-related diseases, although these factors explain two-thirds of the variation in handgrip strength. The significant differences found in handgrip strength in nonagenarians and centenarians in three European regions may be due to population background differences (e.g. genetic variations, birth weight, childhood growth) and to socio-cultural differences (e.g. lifestyle and healthcare). (RH)

ISSN: 10795006

From : <http://www.geron.org>

Happiness and congruence in older adulthood: a structural model of life satisfaction; by A J Bishop, P Martin, L Poon.

Aging & Mental Health, vol 10, no 5, September 2006, pp 445-453.

A structural model of life satisfaction was constructed using data for a sample of 320 older people from the Georgia Centenarian Study. LISREL Linear Structural RELationships) analysis was performed to test a two-factor model that included Happiness and Congruence, and to determine the relationship of health impairment, socioeconomic status (SES), and social support to Happiness and Congruence, two measures of the Life Satisfaction Index - A (LSI-A). Data were found to provide a satisfactory fit of the model. Social support and SES were found to have direct effects on health impairment. Health impairment was a key predictor and mediating variable of Happiness and Congruence. Findings also support a relationship between social resources

and subjective well-being in later life. In particular, the association between social resources and life satisfaction was mediated through health impairment. These findings offer understanding relative to how health and social resources influence past and present assessments of older people's subjective well-being. (RH)

ISSN: 13607863

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

How to be healthy and happy at 100: seven guidelines for ageing women; by Peggy Edwards.

Generations Review, vol 16, no 3/4, September 2006, pp 13-15.

In the course of preparing a report on women, ageing and health for the World Health Organization (WHO), the author, a health promotion consultant from the Chelsea Group, Ottawa, Canada suggests guidelines for women who wish to live to be happy and healthy at age 100. First, don't be born into a poor family. Second, complete secondary education and make learning a lifelong pursuit. Third, get a job in the formal sector that provides a decent wage and access to income and health security benefits. Live in a society that recognises and rewards unpaid caregiving and provides equitable access to health care needs. Fourth, marry a man with a gentle nature who is 10 years younger than you. Fifth, stay physically active, and don't buy into the seductive tactics of the tobacco industry. Sixth, Don't get cardiovascular disease, but if you do, get help early and insist on equal access to treatment. If you live in a developing country, don't get cataracts and other vision problems. Lastly, celebrate menopause as a natural transition and refute against ageist and sexist myths and stereotypes. This is one of eleven papers from the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) 8th Global Conference in May 2006 in this final issue of Generations Review. (RH)

ISSN: 09652000

From : (Editorial e-mail address) gr@ageing.ox.ac.uk

The oldest old in Great Britain: change over the last 20 years; by Cecilia Tomassini.

Population Trends, no 123, Spring 2006, pp 32-40.

This article follows the author's recent analysis of the oldest old (those aged 85+) in the UK (in Population Trends, no 120; 2005). In line with that study, the current study goes beyond the usual practice of treating the oldest old as part of a homogenous older group. Rather, the aim is to disentangle the effects of the individual characteristics of interest and how they vary in this age group when compared to the older population as a whole over the last 20 years. Using data from the General Household Survey (GHS), this study offers detailed descriptive and multivariate analyses of the use of selected health services and the living arrangements of oldest old over the last 20 years. The results indicate increases in the proportions of those living alone and in hospital out-patient visits in contrast to the stability in the proportion visiting their general practitioner (GP). (RH)

ISSN: 03074463

From : <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>

Psychological dispositions and self-reported health among the 'oldest-old' in China; by Zheng Wu, Christoph M Schimmele.

Ageing and Society, vol 26, part 1, January 2006, pp 135-151.

This study's objective is to further our knowledge about what constitutes 'health' for the 'oldest-old' (people aged 80+) in China. It is recognised that apart from the absence of disease, good health is a subjective experience, and it is posited that self-reported health is associated with psychological disposition, or in other words, that an individual's personal attitudes, motivations and beliefs condition their perception of health and illness. The authors use data from China's Longitudinal Healthy Longevity Survey (1998 and 2000 waves) to examine whether psychological disposition had an independent effect of self-reported health in 2000. The study is based on a stratified random sample of 4,366 people aged 80+. After controlling for health status and socio-demographic variables, the multivariate longitudinal results demonstrate that a robust psychological disposition was indeed associated with good short-term, self-reported health. The findings also illustrate that the effect differed by age, for the relationship was significant for octogenarians and nonagenarians, but insignificant for centenarians. Data limitations prevented an empirical investigation of the processes that underlie the relationship between psychological disposition and self-reported health. (RH)

ISSN: 0144686X

From : http://www.journals.cambridge.org/jid_ASO

Siblings of Okinawan centenarians share lifelong mortality advantages; by Bradley J Willcox, D Craig Willcox, Qimei He (et al).

Journals of Gerontology: Series A, Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences, vol 61A, no 4, April 2006, pp 345-354.

Okinawa, an isolated island prefecture of Japan, has among the highest prevalence of exceptionally long-lived individuals in the world. The authors therefore hypothesised that, within this population, genes that confer a

familial survival advantage might have clustered. They analysed pedigrees of 348 centenarians with 1142 siblings, and compared sibling survival with that of the 1890 general population cohort. Both male and female centenarian siblings experienced approximately half the mortality of their birth cohort-matched counterparts. This mortality advantage was sustained and did not diminish with age in contrast to many environmentally based mortality gradients, such as education and income. Cumulative survival advantages for this centenarian sibling cohort increased over the life span, such that female centenarian siblings had a 2.58-fold likelihood, and male siblings had a 5.43-fold likelihood, versus their birth cohorts, of reaching the age of 90. These data support a significant familial component to exceptional human longevity. (RH)

ISSN: 10795006

From : <http://www.geron.org>

2005

Broken limits to life expectancy; by James W Vaupel, Kristin G v Kistowski, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Germany; Oxford Institute of Ageing. Oxford: Oxford Institute of Ageing, Autumn/Winter 2005, pp 6-13.

Ageing Horizons, 2006, no 3, Autumn/Winter 2005, pp 6-13.

Life expectancy has increased at a steady pace in industrialised countries over the last 160 years and a slowdown is not evident. Since 1950, the number of people celebrating their 100th birthday has at least doubled each decade. Survival is increasing as a result of progress in economic developments, social improvements, and advances in medicine. Despite a widespread belief that old-age mortality is intractable, life expectancy is not approaching a limit. Rather, the evidence suggests that ageing is plastic, and that survival can be extended by various genetic changes and non-genetic interactions. Increases in human life expectancy are largely attributed to improvements in old-age survival. A reasonable scenario would be that life expectancy will continue to rise in the coming decades, fuelled by advances in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of age-related diseases. If the trend continues, life expectancy in Europe would exceed 90 years in the first half of this century. Many official forecasts, however, have assumed lower figures - possibly with severe consequences both for public and private decision-making. (RH)

From : Download only from: <http://www.ageing.ox.ac.uk/ageinghorizons>

Centenarians in Barbados: the importance of religiosity in adaptation and coping and life satisfaction in the case of extreme longevity; by Susan Archer, Farley Brathwaite, Henry Fraser. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Pastoral Press, Inc, 2005, pp 3-19.

Journal of Religion, Spirituality and Aging, vol 18, no 1, 2005, pp 3-19.

The high prevalence of centenarians in this developing Caribbean nation prompted an investigation of the factors associated with longevity in this culturally unique cohort. This paper presents qualitative data from in-depth interviews with a sub-sample of 25 centenarians selected from the larger census-based centenarian study (n=60). Interview transcripts were coded by assigning labels to segments of text, which were then used to describe major themes. Findings suggest that religion and spirituality were an integral part of respondents' lives. High levels of religiosity were apparently positively related to successful adaptation and coping and high levels of life satisfaction in the lives of these centenarians, which may have in turn, contributed to their longevity. (RH)

ISSN: 15528030

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Comprehensive health status assessment of centenarians: results from the 1999 Large Health Survey of Veteran Enrollees; by Alfredo J Selim, Graeme Fincke, Dan R Berlowitz (et al).

Journals of Gerontology: Series A, Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences, vol 60A, no 4, April 2005, pp 515-519.

Information on the health status of centenarians provides a means to understanding the health care needs of this growing population. This study uses data from the 1999 Large Health Survey of Veteran Enrollees. 93 American centenarian veteran enrollees returned a completed health survey questionnaire, which included questions about sociodemographic information, age-associated conditions, health behaviours, health-related quality of life as measured by the Veterans SF-36, and change of health status. These centenarians did not perceive much decline in their physical or mental health during the previous year. Despite having a relatively low prevalence of diseases, centenarian veterans are a group with major impairment across multiple dimensions of health-related quality of life. While they had considerable physical limitations as reflected by their physical health summary scores, their mental health was comparatively good. Compared to younger veterans aged 85-99, centenarians had a lower prevalence of hypertension, angina or myocardial infarction, diabetes and chronic low

back pain. These results support future studies of services directed at improvement of function as opposed to those focused solely on the treatment of diseases. (RH)

ISSN: 10795006

From : <http://www.geron.org>

The demographic characteristics of the oldest old in the United Kingdom; by Cecilia Tomassini.

Population Trends, no 120, Summer 2005, pp 15-22.

Those aged 85 and over (the oldest old) are the fastest growing age group in the population of many developed countries. However, it is still uncommon to find statistics and analysis of this age group in current reporting. This article draws together demographic characteristics of people aged 85 and over from various different national data sources to provide an up-to-date picture of the oldest old. (KJ/RH)

ISSN: 03074463

From : <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>

Determinant factors contributing to variations in memory performance in centenarians; by Jan-Åke Hansson, Bo Hagberg.

International Journal of Aging and Human Development, vol 60, no 1, 2005, pp 19-52.

The role of environmental markers in centenarians' memory performance was examined in a study comparing non-cognitive factors to various aspects of memory performance. 100 Swedish centenarians (82 women, 18 men) participated. Selected as non-cognitive factors were quality of life, life habits, health, personality, and autonomy. These factors were later compared to memory performance in short-term memory, semantic memory and episodic memory. Using a structural equation model, results showed that performance in short-term memory was best predicted by life habits and personality, while performance in semantic and episodic memory were best predicted by autonomy and life habits. Implementation of the results from a life-span perspective includes a closer monitoring of environmental markers in the future. In effect, this could preserve memory function and optimum health through old age, thus making interventions easier to realize. (RH)

ISSN: 00914150

From : <http://baywood.com>

Morale in the oldest old: the Umea 85+ study; by Petra von Heideken Wagert, Brigitta Rönmark, Erk Rosendahl (et al).

Age and Ageing, vol 34, no 3, May 2005, pp 249-255.

Half of the 85-year-olds, all 90-year-olds and all aged 95+ (95-103) in Umeå, Sweden were asked to participate in this study, and 218 (out of 319) were interviewed. The 17-item Philadelphia Geriatric Center Morale Scale (PGCMS) was used to measure morale. Participants were also assessed with the Barthel Activities of Daily Living (ALD) Index (BI), Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS-15), Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE), Mini Nutritional Assessment (MNA) and a symptom questionnaire. 199 (84%) of those interviewed answered the PGCMS. Three-quarters had middle range to high morale. GDS score, type of housing, previous stroke, loneliness and number of symptoms, adjusted for age group and sex explained 49.3% of the variance of total PGCMS score. The morale of the oldest old able to respond the PGCMS is at least as high as that shown in previous studies for younger age groups. Depressive symptoms have the strongest association with low morale. The PGCMS seems to be applicable in assessing morale among the oldest old. (RH)

ISSN: 00020729

From : <http://www.ageing.oupjournals.org>

2004

First autopsy study of an Okinawan centenarian: absence of many age-related diseases; by Adam M Bernstein, Bradley J Willcox, Hitoshi Tamaki (et al).

Journals of Gerontology: Series A, Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences, vol 59A, no 11, November 2004, pp 1195-1199.

Consistent with the compression of morbidity hypothesis, several studies have reported that a significant proportion of centenarians delay or escape age-related diseases. Of those who live with such diseases for a long time, they appear to do so with better functional status than do younger people who do not achieve extreme old age. The authors describe the first autopsy for a centenarian from Okinawa, Japan who escaped many age-related illnesses and delayed frailty toward the end of her very long life. Her late-life morbidity pattern is contrasted with that of white centenarians. (RH)

ISSN: 10795006

From : <http://www.geron.org>

Life-long intellectual activities mediate the predictive effect of early education on cognitive impairment in centenarians: a retrospective study; by M Kliegel, D Zimprich, C Rott.

Aging & Mental Health, vol 8, no 5, September 2004, pp 430-437.

90 centenarians from the population-based Heidelberg Centenarian Study were assessed with a modified version of the Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE). The purpose of this study was to examine the hypothesis of whether early education and/or maintaining intellectual activities over the life course have the power to protect against cognitive impairment even in extremely old people. Data about education, occupational status, and life-long intellectual activities in four selected domains were obtained. Results demonstrated that 52% of the sample showed mild-to-moderate cognitive impairment. There was also independent, significant and strong influence of both formal school education and intellectual activities on cognitive status in very late life, even after controlling for occupational status. However, about a quarter of the effect of early education on cognitive status was exerted indirectly via the assessed intellectual activities. In summary, this study provides first evidence for the conclusion that even with regard to cognitive performance in very old age, both early education and life-long intellectual activities seem to be of importance. (RH)

ISSN: 13607863

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Lower all-cause, cardiovascular, and cancer mortality in centenarians' offspring; by Dellara F Terry, Marsha A Wilcox, Maegan A McCormick (et al).

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, vol 52, no 12, December 2004, pp 2074-2076.

Family pedigree information was collected on 295 offspring of centenarians (from 106 families with a parent already enrolled in the US-wide New England Centenarian Study) and on 276 controls (from 82 control families) from 1997 to 2000. Controls were individuals whose parents were born in the same year as the centenarians, but at least one of whom died at average life expectancy. Centenarians' offspring had a 62% lower risk of all-cause mortality, a 71% lower risk of cancer-specific mortality, and an 85% lower risk of coronary heart disease-specific mortality. Significant differences were not found for other causes of death. However, of those who had died, centenarian offspring died at a significantly younger age than controls. The results suggest that mechanisms for survival to exceptional old age may go beyond the avoidance or delay of cardiovascular disease or cancer. Moreover, survival advantage of centenarian offspring may not be due to factors related to childhood mortality. Ultimately, survival to exceptional old age may involve lower susceptibility to a broad range of age-related diseases, perhaps secondary to inhibition of basic mechanisms of ageing. (RH)

ISSN: 00028614

From : <http://www.americangeriatrics.org><http://www.blackwellpublishing.com>

2003

Longevity today: findings of the Heidelberger Hundertjährigen-Studie; by Christoph Rott, BAGSO - Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Senioren-Organisationen.

Seniorenreport, no 2, 2003, pp 6-8.

The Heidelberger Hundertjährigen-Studie identified 156 people aged exactly 100 years old in a geographically demarcated area around Heidelberg. While living a successful old age at 100 is seen as difficult in terms of bodily functions and activities of daily life (ADLs), older people's cognitive capacity at that age appears to give them the capacity to maintain a positive outlook. (RH)

From : <http://www.bagso.org>bagso@easynet.be

Morbidity profiles of centenarians: survivors, delayers and escapers; by Jessica Evert, Elizabeth Lawler, Hazel Bogan (et al).

Journals of Gerontology: Series A, Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences, vol 58A, no 3, March 2003, pp 232-237.

The compression of morbidity hypothesis predicts that, in order to achieve extreme old age, centenarians markedly delay or even escape diseases that would otherwise be lethal at younger ages. The timing of such diseases in centenarians was explored as part of the New England Centenarian Study (NECS). Health history questionnaires were completed by 424 centenarians (age range 97-119) or their proxies, regarding lifetime (to date) diagnoses of 10 major lethal illnesses and one ocular disease (cataracts) befalling this population. Examining the ages of onset of the 10 age-associated diseases (excluding cognitive impairment), three morbidity profiles were identified. Survivors - 24% of males, 43% of females - had had a diagnosis of an age-related illness prior to age 80. Delayers - 44% of males and 42% of females - delayed the onset of age-associated illness until at least age 80. Escapers - 32% of males and 15% of females - attained their 100th year of life without the diagnoses of common age-associated illness. However, only 87% of males and 83% of females delayed or

escaped the most lethal diseases: heart disease, non-skin cancer, and stroke. Thus, there may be multiple routes to achieving exceptional longevity.(RH)

ISSN: 10795006

From : www.geron.org

2002

Age changes and differences in personality traits and states of the old and very old; by Peter Martin, M Valora Long, Leonard W Poon.

Journals of Gerontology: Series B, Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences, vol 57B, no 2, March 2002, pp P144-P152.

Stability and change in personality traits and states for 179 older Americans from three age groups - centenarians, octogenarians, and sexagenarians - were examined in a 2-wave study. Results concerning age group differences indicated that centenarians scored higher in Suspiciousness but lower in Intelligence and Stress, when compared with the other two age groups. Octogenarians were lower in the personality traits Intelligence, Dominance and Conscientiousness, when compared with sexagenarians; and were lower in Arousal but higher on Regression. Results from the longitudinal analyses for centenarians indicated lower scores for Sensitivity, high scores for Radicalism (both personality traits), as well as higher scores for Fatigue and Depression (personality states) at follow-up. For the 2 younger age groups, age changes included higher scores for Sensitivity and Suspiciousness (personality traits). Stability scores for traits and states were considerably lower for centenarians when compared with the younger age groups. (RH)

ISSN: 10795014

Everyday problem-solving in community dwelling cognitively intact centenarians; by Philip A Holtsberg, Leonard W Poon, Carol A Noble (et al).

Hallym International Journal of Aging, vol 4, no 2, 2002, pp 83-98.

Everyday Problem Solving (EPS) abilities for 247 community dwelling well-functioning individuals from the Georgia Centenarian Study - 88 in their 60s, 92 in their 80s, and 67 centenarians - were compared. The concomitant influences of gender, education and race were examined. Mean EPS scores for the three age groups of 25.3, 24.1 and 22.7 respectively, differed significantly. Pair-wise comparisons revealed that the scores of the two oldest age groups differed from the youngest group's, but not from each other. Further, a predicted age group by education interaction was found, and revealed that significant age group differences were limited to highly educated participants. Education was positively related to EPS performances. No race differences in EPS performances were found. Findings are discussed in terms of replicating and extending extant EPS literature into the oldest-old, and in terms of N W Denney's 1984 model of cognitive development across the life-span. (RH)

ISSN: 15356523

Individual and social resources predicting well-being and functioning in later years: conceptual models, research and practice; by Peter Martin.

Ageing International, vol 27, no 2, Spring 2002, pp 3-29.

With increasing age, older people need to draw on their individual and socio-economic resources to adapt to challenges in daily life. A resource model of developmental adaptation is proposed as a conceptual guide for studies emphasising the importance of psychosocial resources as mediators and moderators of adjustment. The present study uses data from the Georgia Centenarian Study which evaluates resources and adaptations for three age groups: 91 sexagenarians; 92 octogenarians; and 137 centenarians. Empirical evidence supporting the resource model of developmental adaptation based on the Study's findings suggests that cumulative adverse events drain socioeconomic resources and increase levels of anxiety. Socio-economic resources exert a stronger effect on mental and functional health than individual resources. Finally, cumulative events predict functional health only for anxious individuals and those with extreme levels of support. (RH)

ISSN: 01635158

2001

The centenarians are coming: are we ready?; by Jo Barker.

Australasian Journal on Ageing, vol 20.3, supplement 2, September 2001, pp 66-68.

Although we don't generally expect to live to 100, there has been a surge in the numbers of centenarians, as part of the global increase in the number of people aged 85+. This paper focuses on some of the major trends - such as health care, technology, lifelong learning, leisure, and biotechnology - as they affect older people in Australia. (RH)

ISSN: 07264240

Cognitive functional status of age-confirmed centenarians in a population-based study; by Margery H Silver, Evguenia Jilinskaia, Thomas T Perls.

Journals of Gerontology: Series B, Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences, vol 56B, no 3, May 2001, pp P134-P140.

To determine the prevalence of dementia in centenarians from the New England Centenarian Study, the authors analysed neuropsychological, medical and functional status data for 34 of the 43 centenarians. 22 had at least some degree of dementia. The authors calculated Barthel Index scores to determine centenarians' ability to perform activities of daily living (ADLs). There was a statistically significant correlation between the Clinical Dementia Rating (CDR) scores and Barthel Index scores. Correlation was strongest for those with no or severe dementia, with the greatest range of function measured for those with moderate dementia. (RH)

ISSN: 10795014

Cognitive functioning in centenarians: a coordinated analysis of results from three countries; by Bo Hagberg, Betty Bauer Alfredson, Leonard W Poon (et al).

Journals of Gerontology: Series B, Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences, vol 56B, no 3, May 2001, pp P141-P151.

Cognitive functions of centenarians in Japan, Sweden and the United States are described. Definitions and prevalence of dementia are compared between the three countries; levels of cognitive performance between centenarians and younger age groups are presented; and inter-individual variations in cognitive performance in centenarians and younger people are compared for Sweden and the US. Swedish and Japanese studies show a variation in the prevalence of dementia between 40% and 43%, with a relatively higher prevalence in women. Along with the lower cognitive performance in centenarians, the Swedish and US results also show a wider range of performance for centenarians for those semantic or experientially related abilities that tend to be maintained over the adult life span. In contrast, a smaller range of performance is found for centenarians on those fluid or process-related abilities that have shown a downward age-related trajectory of performance. The conclusions agree with the assumption of a general increase in cognitive differentiation with increasing age. (RH)

ISSN: 10795014

Dementia is not inevitable: a population-based study of Danish centenarians; by Karen Andersen-Ranberg, Lone Vasegaard, Bernard Jeune (et al).

Journals of Gerontology: Series B, Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences, vol 56B, no 3, May 2001, pp P152-P159.

276 Danes who had turned 100 between 1 April 1995 and 31 May 1996 were interviewed and examined at home. Prevalence of mild to severe dementia was 51%; and 31% had no signs of dementia. Among the 105 demented centenarians, 13 (12%) had diseases (vitamin B12 and folic acid deficiencies, hypothyroidism, Parkinson's disease) that could contribute to a dementia diagnosis. Of the remaining 92 participants, 46 (50%) had one or more cerebrovascular or cardiovascular diseases known to be risk factors in the development of dementia. The prevalence of these risk factors was the same in demented and non-demented participants, whereas hypertension was significantly more frequent on non-demented than demented participants. Thus, dementia is common, but not inevitable in centenarians. (RH)

ISSN: 10795014

Healthy centenarians do not exist, but autonomous centenarians do: a population-based study of morbidity among Danish centenarians; by Karen Anderson-Ranberg, Marianne Schroll, Bernard Jeune.

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, vol 49, no 7, July 2001, pp 900-908.

276 Danes celebrated their 100th birthday between 1 April 1995 and 31 May 1996. Of these, 207 participated in the Longitudinal Study of Danish Centenarians (LSDC), and were visited at home for interview and clinical examination. Cardiovascular diseases was present in 149 (72%), osteoarthritis in 54%, hypertension in 52%, dementia in 51%, and ischaemic heart disease in 28%. The mean number of illnesses was 4.3. Only one subject was identified as being free from any chronic condition or illness. 60% had been treated for illness with high mortality. Thus, because they have a high prevalence of several common diseases and chronic conditions, Danish centenarians are not healthy. However, a minor proportion was identified as being cognitively intact and functioning well. (RH)

ISSN: 00028614

A molecular view of coping behavior in older adults; by Peter Martin, Christoph Rott, Leonard W Poon (et al).
Journal of Aging and Health, vol 13, no 1, February 2001, pp 72-91.

The major focus of this study is on the assessment of individual differences (relating to age, gender, ethnicity and education) in specific ("molecular") coping behaviours. Data from the Georgia Centenarian Study in the US was used to explore 35 specific coping reactions for 74 sexagenarians, 70 octogenarians and 116 centenarians. Significant age group, gender, and education differences were found for 14 coping reactions. 4 items were exclusively affected by age, 5 were affected only by gender, and 3 were affected only by education. No ethnicity differences were found. The largest effect for an age group was found for accepting health problems. (RH)

ISSN: 08982643

2000

A century of centenarians; by John McCormack.
Generations Review, vol 10, no 1, March 2000, pp 10-12.

The author is undertaking a study of centenarians in Australia, and presents a preliminary picture of people in this extreme age group and those approaching the oldest ages. As there are no exact figures on the number of centenarians in Australia, the sources on which possible figures may be estimated are assessed. These include the 1996 Census and statistics from Australia's Department of Health and Aged Care. Recent Australian Life Tables highlight a levelling out of mortality rates for very advanced ages, particularly males. (RH)

ISSN: 09652000

Disability and contact with services in very elderly people; by Tom Denning, Rhian Gabe.

Reviews in Clinical Gerontology, vol 10, no 3, August 2000, pp 291-309.

Very old people may be defined by means of age, say, over 80 or over 85. This paper is based on a Medline search combining the following headings: aged 80 and over (or centenarians); disability; and health services. The Cochrane Library was also searched for relevant items. Given the large literature, the reviewers focused on studies on the effectiveness of services for very old people, and those discharged from hospital or in rehabilitation programmes. They discuss the limitations of their review and of the published studies, and the implications for services, research and policy. (RH)

ISSN: 09592598

Hitting a century: centenarians in Australia; by John McCormack.
Australasian Journal on Ageing, vol 19, no 2, May 2000, pp 75-80.

Census data show that people aged 100 years or more are increasing in number. However, there is a dearth of local information on these people as a socio-economic group. This study uses secondary data sources to compose a preliminary picture of centenarians in Australia. Historical census records, unpublished census data and government departmental data were also obtained. Recent differences in age data recording in Australia leads to an estimate of the current number of centenarians. This estimate however builds on a strong growth trend, and the number of centenarians appears likely to increase, possibly doubling by 2006. The data show heterogeneity in Australian centenarians' social circumstances such that they do not necessarily fit a frail stereotype. A register of centenarians and a return to single year age recording of all people in the census is suggested. (RH)

ISSN: 07264240

Loneliness, religiousness and purpose in life in the oldest old; by Margareth Bondevik, Anders Skogstad.
Journal of Religious Gerontology, vol 11, no 1, 2000, pp 5-22.

Two groups of Norwegian individuals 80 years of age and older, one living in nursing homes and one in the community, were compared with respect to loneliness, religiousness, purpose in life (PIL) and age group. There were no differences in loneliness identified between groups with regard to residence. Community residents aged 80-89 reported significantly higher loneliness scores than did those aged 90-105. Most of the subjects reported religion to be important, but age group comparisons yielded non-significant results. Residents living in the community reported significantly higher PIL scores than did residents in institutions. In addition, the oldest community group reported significantly higher PIL scores compared with the lower aged group. Analysis of variance showed significantly higher (negative) correlations between loneliness and purpose in life than between these phenomena and religiousness. (KJ/RH)

ISSN: 10502289

From : Haworth Document Delivery Center, The Haworth Press Inc., 10 Alice Street, Binghamton, NY 13904-1580, USA.

The long goodbye; by Jenny Bryan.

Health Service Journal, vol 110, no 5686, 6 January 2000, pp 16-18.

Reaching a 100th birthday will soon become a commonplace event. But the centenarians of the new millennium will not be the chronic sick and long-stayers of managers' worst nightmares. (RH)

ISSN: 09522271

Prevalence of dementia in centenarians; by Ben A Blansjaar, René Thomassen, Henri W van Schaick.

International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, vol 15, no 3, March 2000, pp 219-225.

Above age 65, the prevalence of dementia rises exponentially from 1% to 15% at age 85. Despite many studies concerning dementia, little is known about the prevalence of dementia in the "oldest old". Whether the prevalence levels off around age 95 is yet unanswered, although recent studies postulate a plateau value of 40%-45% at that age. This question is important because it addresses whether dementia is an inevitable consequence of ageing or a disorder occurring within a specific age range. All 17 people aged 100 and over in three Dutch towns with 250,000 inhabitants were examined by means of cognitive tests, informant questionnaires, clinical interviews and anamneses. Fifteen of the 17 Dutch centenarians were found to be demented; and two could not be examined. This very high prevalence of dementia in a complete sample of centenarians strongly suggests that we will all become demented if we live to our maximum life span potential. (RH)

ISSN: 08856230

1999

Circadian heart rhythms in Japanese centenarians; by Kenichiro Shimizu, Nobuyoshi Hirose, Takayuki Yonemoto (et al).

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, vol 47, no 9, September 1999, pp 1094-1099.

Age-associated changes in the circadian rhythm of the heart rate was investigated in fifty Japanese centenarians in this study. The participants, and a control group, underwent 24-hour ambulatory electrocardiogram (Holter) monitoring. The relationship between clinical parameters (activities of daily living (ADL), cognitive function, nutritional status, and present illness) and patterns of heart rate rhythm was investigated. Results revealed circadian changes in the centenarians, which were not related to ADL, cognitive function, nutritional status, present illness, and life expectancy. These findings may indicate that circadian changes are caused by ageing and not dependent on clinical status in very old persons. (AKM)

ISSN: 00028614

Declining physical abilities with age: a cross-sectional study of older twins and centenarians in Denmark; by Karen Andersen-Ranberg, Kaare Christensen, Bernard Jeune (et al).

Age and Ageing, vol 28, no 4, July 1999, pp 373-378.

The objective of this Danish cross-sectional survey was to evaluate whether physical disability reaches a plateau in the oldest old age groups, based on the ability to perform selected items of basic activities of daily living independently. A total of 3351 individuals participated, which included all those living in Denmark who celebrated their 100th anniversary during the period from 1 April 1995 to 31 May 1996 (276 subjects) and all Danish twins aged 75-94 registered in the Danish Twin Register (3075 subjects). The prevalence of independence in each of six selected ADLs was significantly lower in both men and women centenarians, compared with octogenarians and septuagenarians. The sex difference in independence in all six selected ADLs was larger for each advancing group, with women being most disabled. In centenarians, 20% of women and 44% of men were able to perform all selected ADLs independently. Compared with individuals aged 75-79 years, physical abilities of men and women gradually diminished in age groups 80-84, 85-90 and 90-94, with the lowest levels among 100-year-olds. Although women had lower mortality, they are more disabled than men, and this difference is more marked with advancing age. (RH)

ISSN: 00020729

The demography of centenarians in England and Wales; by Roger Thatcher.

Population Trends, no 96, Summer 1999, pp 5-12.

The largest single cause for the increase in the number of centenarians has been the falling trend in death rates at very high ages (over 80) since the 1940s and 1950s. This trend is expected to continue. The Government Actuary projects that the number of centenarians in England and Wales will rise from 6,000 in 1996 to reach 39,000 in 2036. Projections made for this article suggest a further rise to 95,000 in 2066. The author uses a new database (currently held at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock, Germany, where it can be identified for reference as the Kannisto-Thatcher database) to investigate the causes of the "explosion" in the numbers of centenarians. The latest official projections for the future are examined, and their implications

for the highest ages which are likely to be attained. Annexes explain the data and sources, and how their use results in differing estimates of the numbers of centenarians being reached. (RH)
ISSN: 03074463

Reasons for hospital admission in New Zealand's oldest old; by T J Wilkinson.

Australasian Journal on Ageing, vol 18, no 2, May 1999, pp 93-97.

Studies describing hospitalisation patterns among the oldest old have rarely been undertaken, and there have been none in the UK, Australia or New Zealand. In this study, a descriptive survey of all hospital admissions in New Zealand over 12 months was conducted to determine the main causes of morbidity in New Zealand's oldest old, as measured by those conditions requiring hospital admission; the types of conditions which show continued increases in hospital admission or bed occupancy rates with age; and the types of conditions which have lower admission or occupancy rates among the oldest-old group compared with the younger-old group. Findings showed that bed occupancy rates increased with age. Hospital admission rates increased with age but declined for people aged 100 years and over. Stroke, cognitive/mood disorders, fractures and arthritis were significant causes of morbidity among the oldest old. The rates of hospital admission due to fractures, accidents, and stroke peaked for people aged 90-99 years but was less common in centenarians. Less specific presentations of disease occurred in the older populations. (AKM)

ISSN: 07264240

Thyroid function, morphology and prevalence of thyroid disease in a population-based study of Danish centenarians; by Karen Andersen-Ranberg, Bernard Jeune, Mimi Høier-Madsen (et al).

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, vol 47, no 10, October 1999, pp 1238-1243.

Little is known about the thyroid in the very old population, and it is not clear whether low prevalence of thyroid auto-antibodies in healthy centenarians is due to ageing or simultaneous disease. This population-based study of Danish centenarians investigated thyroid function, morphology, and autoimmunity in relation to physical function. In all, 207 of the 276 eligible centenarians participated and 148 agreed to blood tests. Findings showed that thyroid dysfunction did not seem more prevalent among centenarians than among younger old people. Low serum T3 was related to poor physical function and comorbidity, whereas thyroid autoimmunity was related only to poor physical functioning. Despite atrophy of the thyroid gland, the findings suggest that thyroid function is well preserved in centenarians. (AKM)

ISSN: 00028614

Validity of reported age and centenarian prevalence in New England; by Thomas T Perls, Kathreen Bochen, Melissa Freeman (et al).

Age and Ageing, vol 28, no 2, March 1999, pp 193-197.

The age reported by or on behalf of centenarians may be suspect unless proven correct. In this US study, there were 289 potential centenarians reported by the censuses in the eight towns participating in the New England Centenarian Study. Of these, 186 (64%) had died at the time centenarian prevalence was determined. Of the 80 still alive, 13 (16%) had incorrect birth years recorded by the censuses. The specificity of the censuses for stating the number of centenarians still alive and living in the sample was 28-31%. Using additional sources, only four more centenarians were located. There was an 83% success rate in obtaining proof of age in those families interviewed. In all instances, age and birth order of children were an important source of corroborative evidence, and no cases of inconsistencies with families' reported ages were detected. Poor specificity of the census (about 30%) - mainly because of deaths not being notified - underscores the importance of doing population-based studies, and of seeking verification of birth dates in studies of very old people. (RH)

ISSN: 00020729

1998

The association between mortality, morbidity and age in New Zealand's oldest old; by Tim J Wilkinson, Richard Sainsbury.

International Journal of Aging and Human Development, vol 46, no 4, 1998, pp 333-343.

The population in New Zealand, as in many other countries, is ageing, and the proportion of the oldest old (85 years and over) is increasing. Because of their smaller numbers and relative inaccessibility, the health status of this population has sometimes been extrapolated from populations of people aged 65 to 84 years. For people aged 65 to 84 years an exponential relationship is seen between age and morbidity and mortality. This study examined whether this exponential relationship extends to people aged 90 years and over. Data from the New Zealand 1991 Census and 1992 hospital discharge records were analysed, and an exponential relationship between age and mortality, inactivity, hospital utilisation, and occupation of residential institution was confirmed. This exponential trend did not continue for people aged 90 years and over for whom mortality rates

and indicators of morbidity were considerably lower than expected, and indicate that the actual health status of people aged 90 years and over is better than the status extrapolated from that of people aged 60 to 89 years. (AKM)

ISSN: 00914150

A census-based comparison of centenarians in New Zealand with those in the United States; by Tim J Wilkinson, Richard Sainsbury.

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, vol 46, no 4, April 1998, pp 488-491.

The authors describe the characteristics of New Zealand centenarians, as given in the 1991 census, as compared with those of US centenarians. In 1991, there were 246 female and 51 male centenarians in New Zealand. 51% of the men and 29% of the women lived at home; 16% lived at home with someone else (55% with children). Those who were widowed were more likely to be living in a residential institution (69%) than people who were married (40%). 43% of men and 39% of women earned less than NZ\$10,000 per year. Most had no formal educational qualifications. 14% of men and 35% of women living at home had done housework in the previous week. Compared with the US, there are fewer New Zealand centenarians per number of population. People of European race were overrepresented in the New Zealand centenarian population, whereas African Americans were overrepresented in the US centenarian population. The authors suggest that data demonstrating the heterogeneity associated with extreme ageing can be used as a basis for comparison with other countries. (RH)

ISSN: 00028614

Demographic characteristics of supplement users in an elderly population; by Denise K Houston, Tena D Daniel, Mary Ann Johnson (et al).

Journal of Applied Gerontology, vol 17, no 1, March 1998, pp 79-96.

This study investigated the association of demographic characteristics with vitamin or mineral supplement use in 257 older participants of the Georgia Centenarian Study, aged 60 years, 80 years and 100 years and over. Of these participants, 44% used a specific vitamin or mineral supplement. Multivitamins/minerals (28%), vitamin C (13%) and Vitamin E (7%) were the most common vitamins reported, whereas calcium (8%) and potassium (5%) were the most common minerals reported. Centenarians were as likely as those in their 60s and 80s to use a supplement. Women were more likely than men to report consuming any supplement and multivitamins/minerals; white individuals were more likely than black individuals to report consuming any supplement, vitamin E, and vitamin C. The study concluded that health care providers must be aware that even the oldest old are frequent users of supplements, but being male and of minority status may be a barrier to the use of nutritional supplements.

ISSN: 07334648

Features of cancer in nonagenarians and centenarians; by Sidney L Saltzstein, Cynthia A Behling, Rebecca N Baergen.

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, vol 46, no 8, August 1998, pp 994-998.

One of the fastest growing segments of the population of the US is people aged 90 years and older, and the incidence, mortality, and features of diseases in this age group are becoming important to health care providers. This study described the incidence rates and sites of cancer, the causes of death, and gender and ethnic variations in patients with cancer in a population of people aged 90 years and over. Results showed that the peak age-specific incidence (ASI) of cancer was in the group 80 to 84 years of age. Those aged between 90 and 94 had a higher ASI than any group except those aged 75-89. Ethnic variations in the sites of cancer in people aged 90 years and over were found. The most common cancers were: colorectal cancer, breast cancer, lymphoma/leukemia, prostate cancer, and lung cancer. As age increased, fewer people had their cancers staged. Of the people with cancer who died, the proportion dying of cancer decreased as age increased. (AKM)

ISSN: 00028614

The longevity strategy: how to live to 100 using the brain-body connection; by David Mahoney, Richard Restak. Chichester: John Wiley, 1998, 250 pp.

Older people aged 85 years and over now constitute the fastest-growing population in the United States (US), with a substantial increase in the number of centenarians. The authors of this book gives advice on how people can develop and enhance their longevity potential by focusing on the brain-body connection, which is the interaction among three factors: health of the brain; attitudes and thought patterns; and physical health. In particular, the importance of handling stress, lifelong education, mental activity, social relationships, and physical exercise are highlighted as key factors for longevity. (AKM)

ISBN: 0471248673

Price: £17.99

From : John Wiley & Sons Ltd, Baffins Lane, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1UD.

Mental health of the oldest old: the relevance of centenarian studies to psychogeriatric research; by Karen Ritchie.

International Psychogeriatrics, vol 10, no 1, March 1998, pp 7-9.

As life expectancy increases in the western world, research on centenarians is becoming more widespread with clinical and population studies having been conducted in several European countries, Japan, China and the United States (US). In this article, the author looks at how research on healthy centenarians may contribute to the knowledge of the aetiology of mental disorders, such as dementia. (AKM)

ISSN: 10416102

Negative and positive affect among the very old: a survey on a sample age 90 years or older; by Pernilla K Hillerås, Anthony F Jorm, Agneta Herlitz (et al).

Research on Aging, vol 20, no 5, September 1998, pp 593-610.

Positive and negative affect represent the emotional components of subjective well-being. The aim of this Swedish study was to measure positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA), and the factors that might influence these in very old people. The study involved 105 people aged 90 years and older, who were not cognitively impaired, living in Kungsholmen, Stockholm. The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule was translated and used to measure affect. Results showed that PA and NA were virtually uncorrelated. Furthermore, it was also demonstrated that the factors that influence affect in very elderly persons are similar to those influencing affect in younger ages and that personality traits are the major correlates of affect. (AKM)

ISSN: 01640275

Outcomes of anesthesia and surgery in people 100 years of age and older; by Mark A Warner, Rachel A Saletel, Darrell R Schroeder (et al).

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, vol 46, no 8, August 1998, pp 988-993.

Reports of successful perioperative management of very old people have resulted in surgeons becoming increasingly willing to perform surgery on people aged 90 years and older. However, there are few reports in the outcomes of surgical procedures performed on centenarians. This US study assessed the outcomes of anaesthesia and surgery for men and women and 100 years and over who underwent surgery at a participating hospital. Results showed that 31 men and women aged between 100 and 107 underwent 42 procedures. One major complication (3%) within 48 hours was observed. The 48-hour, 30 day, and 1-year mortality rates were 0%, 16.1%, and 35.5%, respectively. When compared with survival rates for age-, gender, and calendar year of birth-matched peers from the general population, the survival rate for centenarians who underwent surgery was comparable to the rate expected. The study concluded that centenarians should not be denied surgical interventions because of perceived risks associated with their advanced age. (AKM)

ISSN: 00028614

Oxidative stress and advancing age: results in healthy centenarians; by Giuseppe Paolisso, Maria Rosario Tagliamonte, Maria Rosaria Rizzo (et al).

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, vol 46, no 7, July 1998, pp 833-838.

Ageing and age-related degenerative diseases may induce changes that foster systemic anti-oxidant/pro-oxidant imbalance, which results in oxidative stress. In particular, major causes of disability in older people such as atherosclerosis, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes mellitus and hypertension, are also considered free radical related diseases. 82 people volunteered for this Italian study: 30 under 50s; 30 aged 70-99; and 22 aged 100 years and over. Results indicated that centenarians have a degree of oxidative stress lower than aged subjects, but higher than adults. Differences in anti-oxidant defences (plasma vitamins E and C and reduced/oxidised glutathione ratio), fasting plasma glucose, and FFA (free fatty acid) concentrations and insulin resistance seem to contribute to the genesis of oxidative stress and to the differences between aged persons and centenarians. Differences in daily vegetable intake and in metabolic parameters might play a role. Further studies will need to investigate the role of genetic background on the degree of oxidative stress and the amount of anti-oxidant defences. (RH)

ISSN: 00028614

Quality of life and longevity: a study of centenarians; by Marirosa Dello Buono, Ornella Urciuoli, Diego De Leo.

Age and Ageing, vol 27, no 2, March 1998, pp 207-216.

The aim of the study was to examine the quality of life of centenarians in the Veneto region of Italy both quantitatively and qualitatively. The study was conducted between October 1992 and July 1995, and used data collected using two questionnaires: the Profile of Elderly Quality of Life (PEQOL), and the LEIPAD (Leiden and Padua) quality of life assessment instrument developed to measure self-perceived functioning and well-being. Three groups each of 38 older people were compared: centenarians, and subjects aged 75-85, and 86-99. The centenarians complained less spontaneously about their health (maintained in part by medical treatments), but declared having greater functional disability. Their cognitive function appeared reasonably well preserved, and they had lower scores for anxiety and depression than younger age groups. They considered themselves religious, satisfied with their financial situation, but no longer interested in sex or recreational activities. They reported greater satisfaction with life and with social and family relations than the less elderly age groups. (RH)

ISSN: 00020729

Siblings of centenarians live longer; by Thomas T Perls, Ellen Bubrick, Carrie G Wager (et al).

The Lancet, vol 351, no 9115, 23 May 1998, p 1560.

While conducting a population-based study of centenarians, the authors were struck by the large number who also had long-lived siblings. Comparing the survival rates of siblings of centenarians and siblings of a similar birth cohort who died in their early 70s, they found that the siblings of their centenarians had a four times greater chance of surviving to their early 90s. Supporting evidence is also provided by studies of old genealogies. Previous work suggests that genes may play an increasingly important role in achieving age beyond average life expectancy; however, further work is required to elucidate the contribution of genes to the familial component of extreme longevity. (RH)

ISSN: 01406736

Unraveling the mystery of cognitive changes in old age: correlation of neuropsychological evaluation with neuropathological findings in the extreme old; by Margery Silver, Kathy Newell, Bradley Hyman (et al).

International Psychogeriatrics, vol 10, no 1, March 1998, pp 25-41.

In order to understand what cognitive changes can be expected with ageing versus those caused by disease, the New England Centenarian Study examined correlations between neuropsychological evaluation and neuropathological studies of centenarian subjects. Sixty-nine subjects were administered an extensive neuropsychological test battery designed for centenarians. Six brain donors from this group have subsequently died, and neuropathological studies of their brains have been performed to determine the presence of Alzheimer's disease (AD) and other pathological states. Of these six centenarians, three subjects had Clinical Dementia Rating scores of 0 and no dementia on neuropsychological testing, and subsequent neuropathology showed very limited AD changes. Despite a range of neuropsychological findings, none of the subjects met neuropathological criteria for a diagnosis of definite AD. Findings suggest that dementia is not inevitable with ageing, and that dementia in this age group is surprisingly often not attributable to AD. (AKM)

ISSN: 10416102

1997

Ageing and Alzheimer's disease: lessons from the Nun Study; by David A Snowdon.

The Gerontologist, vol 37, no 2, April 1997, pp 150-156.

This article describes the cognitive status of one participant in the Nun Study, a longitudinal study on Alzheimer's disease (AD). Sister Mary, a nun in the Notre Dame convent in Baltimore, Maryland, was a remarkable woman who had high cognitive test scores before her death at 101 years of age. Despite having abundant neurofibrillary tangles and senile plaques, the classic lesions of Alzheimer's disease, her high cognitive status was maintained. Findings from Sister Mary and all 678 participants in the Nun Study may provide unique clues about the aetiology of ageing and Alzheimer's disease, exemplify what is possible in older age, and show how the clinical expression of some diseases may be averted. (AKM)

ISSN: 00169013

Centenarian study, 100 at 100: an interview study with 100 centenarians from the UK and Ireland; commissioned and published to celebrate DGAA Homelife's 100th birthday in 1997; by Gillian Dalley, Rhonda Smith (ed), DGAA Homelife; Centre for Policy on Ageing - CPA. London: DGAA Homelife, 1997, 44 pp.

A study of 100 centenarians carried out by CPA on behalf of DGAA Homelife to mark their centenary. Narrative descriptive style illustrated with statistical table, portrait photographs and case studies. Topics covered

include family, marriage and childhood, lifestyle and health, experiences and memories, change and attitude to modern life, religious beliefs and death and dying.

ISBN: 0950955604

Price: £25

From : Elizabeth Finn Trust, 1 Derry Street, London W8 4SY.

Centenarians; by Centre for Policy on Ageing - CPA. London: Centre for Policy on Ageing, October 1997, 1 p (CPA briefings, no 7).

In 1997, the CPA (Centre for Policy on Ageing) was commissioned by a leading charity to conduct an interview study of 100 centenarians to mark the charity's one hundredth birthday. The intention of the study was to present a picture of the experience of individuals who have lived throughout the life of this century, to document their views on changes, and to record some of their stories. Some conclusions from the study, 'A view of the century: centenarians talking', by Gillian Dalley and Michael Denniss - to be published by CPA in 1998 - are presented in this briefing.

Price: FOC

From : CPA, 19-23 Ironmonger Row, London EC1V 3QP.

Centenarians: human longevity outliers; by David W E Smith.

The Gerontologist, vol 37, no 2, April 1997, pp 200-206.

The number and percentage of centenarians in the US population is expected to increase. In this article, the author looks at the characteristics of people aged 100 years and over. They are more resistant to causes of death such as heart disease and cancer than those who die at younger ages. Inheritance of life span, the present condition of centenarians, and their causes of death are considered. The maximum human life span in the future will be affected, at least marginally, as more centenarians survive to challenge today's maximum age of 121 years. (AKM)

ISSN: 00169013

Demography and gerontology: mortality trends among oldest old; by Emily Grundy.

Ageing and Society, vol 17, part 6, November 1997, pp 713-725.

This paper provides a brief introduction to demography and population science and the newly emerged subfield of the demography of ageing. Links with gerontology are explored. Recent work on mortality at very high ages and on the black-white mortality 'cross-over' reported from the United States (US) is reviewed. These topics are important substantively and theoretically, and also serve to illustrate demographic approaches to data and data analysis. Analytic approaches to the topics reviewed have had to be imaginative as there are major problems with data on very old people. Recent work indicates that the mortality of very old people, including centenarians, has fallen considerably, at least in those countries where reliable data exist. The mortality 'cross-over', however, appears to be artefactual, at least at ages under 95 years.

ISSN: 0144686X

Determinants of functional status in healthy Italian nonagenarians and centenarians: a comprehensive functional assessment by the instruments of geriatric practice; by Giovanni Ravaglia, Paolo Forti, Fabiola Maioli (et al).

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, vol 45, no 10, October 1997, pp 1196-1202.

This study evaluated the physical, mental and emotional status of 84 healthy older people aged between 90 and 106, living in their own homes and in nursing homes. The following functional assessment instruments were used: Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE); Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS); and Activities of Daily Living (ADL). A number of medical and sociodemographic variables, including serum DHEAS levels, were also evaluated in each subject to find any association with functional status measures. The findings revealed that the majority of the subjects had some degree of physical and cognitive impairment, but no increase in depression prevalence was found. Muscular mass and DHEA levels were found to have a role in maintaining physical independence. It was concluded that the standard instruments used in geriatric practice may not be reliable in evaluating the psychocognitive status of this age group because they need longer interviews and find them more tiring.

ISSN: 00028614

Eugeria, longevity and normal ageing; by Karen Ritchie.

The British Journal of Psychiatry, vol 171, no 12, December 1997, p 501.

The notion of 'successful ageing' was probably first described by Aristotle. He used the term 'eugeria', which he defined as living a long and happy life, without suffering, and without being a burden to others. This short article about Jeanne Calment, who died on 4 August 1997 aged 122 years and was considered to be the oldest human being in history, considers the reasons for her longevity; she may well have achieved eugeria.

ISSN: 00071250

Factors of nutritional health-seeking behaviors: findings from the Georgia centenarian study; by Mary Ellen Quinn, Mary Ann Johnson, Leonard W Poon (et al).

Journal of Aging and Health, vol 9, no 1., February 1997, pp 90-104.

Health-seeking behaviours are described by Harris and Guten (1979) as any behaviour of an individual that promotes, protects or maintains one's health, regardless of actual or perceived health status. The purpose of this study was to determine if nutritional health-seeking behaviour (Bausell, 1986) comprised one or more factors for older adults. Participants were in their 60s, 80s and 100 years or older. Exploratory factor analysis indicated that nutritional health-seeking behaviour items formed two factors: avoid (i.e., avoiding unhealthy nutritional behaviour) and seek (i.e., attempting or seeking healthy nutritional behaviour). Multiple regression analysis revealed that risk factors for poor nutritional health-seeking behaviours in older adults included advanced age, low economic resources, and male gender. Protective factors included the personality factors of self-discipline, enthusiasm, sensitivity, and warmth. (AKM)

ISSN: 08982643

Predictors of loneliness in centenarians: a parallel study; by Peter Martin, Bo Hagberg, Leonard W Poon.

Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology, vol 12, no 3, September 1997, pp 203-224.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate predictors of loneliness in centenarians in the United States (US) and in Sweden. It was hypothesised that cognition, personality, social support and physical health would predict loneliness. Data from centenarian participants of the Swedish Centenarian Study and the Georgia Centenarian study were used. Results indicated that personality, social support and physical health were good predictors of loneliness in the US sample, while cognition and social support were the strongest predictors in the Swedish sample. Social support predicted loneliness negatively in the US sample, but was positively associated with loneliness in Sweden.

ISSN: 01693816

Preserved antipolytic insulin action is associated with a less atherogenic plasma lipid profile in healthy centenarians; by Giuseppe Paolisso, Antonio Gambardella, Stefania Ammendola (et al).

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, vol 45, no 12, December 1997, pp 1504-1509.

Recent studies have demonstrated that centenarians have a preserved glucose tolerance and insulin action and a more favourable body composition and fat distribution than people aged 75 years and over. The strong relationship among glucose tolerance, insulin action, plasma lipid concentration, and lipoprotein metabolism would lead to the hypothesis that healthy centenarians may also have a less atherogenic profile than older subjects less than a 100 years old. This Italian study investigated the relationship between insulin action and lipid metabolism in adults, older people aged 75 or over but less than 100 years, and centenarians. The findings demonstrated that the centenarians had a less atherogenic plasma lipid and lipoprotein profile than subjects aged less than 75 years. (AKM)

ISSN: 00028614

Psychiatric symptoms in a total population of very elderly: data from physician examinations and informant reports; by Y Forsell, B Winblad.

Aging & Mental Health, vol 1, no 3, August 1997, pp 238-242.

Knowledge about the epidemiology of psychiatric symptoms and associated variables in very old people is sparse. The aim of this study was to further explore this issue in a very elderly population using data from physician examinations and informant interviews. Three-hundred-and-thirty persons aged 90 years and over in Stockholm, Sweden, were extensively examined by physicians, including the administration of a psychiatric interview. Informants were also interviewed. Of the 330 participants, 253 persons had complete data. Of the 253, 114 were suffering from dementia and 139 were not. Generally, the informants reported more psychiatric symptoms than what were recorded at the physicians' examinations. Symptoms reported included sleep disturbances, anxiety and suicidal thoughts. If dementia was present, informants generally reported more psychiatric symptoms than the persons themselves. However, both suicidal and depressive thoughts were more often registered at the physicians' examinations. No correlations were found between somatic disorders, social support, demographic variables or disabilities in daily living and number of psychiatric symptoms according to informant or physician data. (AKM)

ISSN: 13607863

From : <http://www.tandfonline.com>

A survey of habitual snoring in centenarians; by Tshiaki Shiomi, Christian Guilleminault, Yuhei Kayukawa (et al).

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, vol 45, no 1, January 1997, pp 84-86.

103 Japanese centenarians (21 men and 82 women) were asked about their sleep habits, breathing, and snoring; some caregivers also provided information. Nineteen of the centenarians (18.4%: 5 men and 14 women) were habitual snorers, and two (1.9%) were suspected of having sleep apnoea syndrome because of the presence of heavy snoring and nocturnal respiratory arrest. Thus, most of these centenarians were non-snorers and without breathing pauses in their sleep. Their snoring rates were no different from those of younger aged older adults in the same population. (RH)

ISSN: 00028614

The Swedish centenarian study: a multidisciplinary study of five consecutive cohorts at the age of 100; by S-M Samuelsson, B Bauer Alfredson, B Hagberg (et al).

International Journal of Aging and Human Development, vol 45, no 3, 1997, pp 223-253.

Centenarians born 1887-91, who lived in southern Sweden, participated in this multidisciplinary study (a total of 100). The purpose was to describe the population from physical, social, and psychological points of view; to characterise centenarians with various health conditions and diverse degrees of autonomy and life satisfaction; and to identify factors at 100 years that predict future survival. Results showed that 82% were women, 25% lived in their own homes, and 38% in nursing homes. Socioeconomic status showed a similar distribution compared to nationally representative data. Fifty-two percent managed activities of daily living (ADL) with or without minor assistance. The incidence of severe diseases was low. Thirty-nine percent of the women and eleven percent of the men had at least one hip fracture. Twenty-seven percent were demented according to DSM III-R criteria. Means on cognitive tests were lower compared to 70 to 80 year old groups. Personality profiles indicated that the centenarians were more responsible, capable, easygoing, and less prone to anxiety than the population in general. (AKM)

ISSN: 00914150

1996

The economic well-being of community-dwelling centenarians; by Marsha A Goetting, Peter Martin, Leonard W Poon, Mary Ann Johnson.

Journal of Aging Studies, vol 10, no 1, Spring 1996, pp 43-55.

Presents findings from a study which compared the economic well-being of a group of centenarians with two younger groups of older people in their 60s and 80s.

ISSN: 08904065

The oldest man ever?: a case study of exceptional longevity; by John Wilmoth, Axel Skytthe, Diana Friou, Bernard Jeune.

The Gerontologist, vol 36, no 6, December 1996, pp 783-788.

This article summarises recent findings in the case study of CM, a resident of San Rafael, California, who was 114 years old in August 1996, and is the first properly verified case of a 114 year old man in human history (although a few women have been known to live longer). The authors' investigation of CM continue as they attempt to gather additional information about his life, family history, and current condition. This article considers the authenticity of the case and its significance in the history of human longevity. It records characteristics of the man's life that may provide clues about the causes of his exceptional survivorship.

ISSN: 00169013

Personality traits and states as predictors of subjective well-being in centenarians, octogenarians, and sexagenarians; by Geneva Adkins, Peter Martin, Leonard W Poon.

Psychology and Aging, vol 11, no 3, September 1996, pp 408-416.

The predictability of personality for psychological well-being in centenarians when compared to sexagenarians and octogenarians was investigated. Multiple regressions were computed to examine the separate and joint effects of personality traits and states upon morale. Results indicate that low tension and high extroversion predicted high morale for centenarians. Guilt was the most important personality state predicting morale for the 60s group. Control variables gender and health were significant for the 80s age group. The assessment of personality traits and states has important implications for working with centenarians and other older adults to maintain or improve their subjective well-being.

ISSN: 08827974

Personality, longevity, and successful aging among Tokyo metropolitan centenarians; by Yoshiko Shimonaka, Katsuharu Nakazato, Akira Homma.

International Journal of Aging and Human Development, vol 42, no 3, 1996, pp 173-187.

This article compares 82 centenarians (37 men and 45 women) with 605 people aged 60-89, in which personality and successful ageing were measured. The authors found that androgeny was not more prominent among centenarians than masculinity, femininity or undifferentiated. Their hypothesis that behaviour not displaying characteristics of hostility, anger, harassment, cynicism and suspiciousness is related to longevity was supported. They observed lower self-esteem for femininity than for either masculinity or androgeny; and that anxiety was lower for femininity than masculinity but higher than androgeny among women. The relationship of particular types of behaviour to successful ageing differs between men and women.

ISSN: 00914150

Prevalence of dementia and distribution of ApoE Alleles in Japanese centenarians: an almost-complete survey in Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan; by Takashi Asada, Zentaro Yamagata, Toru Kinoshita, Akemi Kinoshita (et al).

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, vol 44, no 2, February 1996, pp 151-155.

Reports on a study which examined the prevalence and types of dementia in centenarians, and investigated the extent to which ApoE Alleles influence the development of Alzheimer's disease in centenarians.

ISSN: 00028614

Therapy with very old people; by Catherine Dooley.: Psychologists' Special Interest Group in Elderly People - PSIGE, British Psychological Society, October 1996, pp 19-23.

PSIGE Newsletter, no 58, October 1996, pp 19-23.

This paper attempts to integrate aspects of clinical experience with research and thinking on therapy. In talking about "very old" people, reference is those aged 80 plus. In this article, the author assesses the relevance of the literature and theory to her particular work experience and to the needs of very old people. (RH)

ISSN: 13603671