

EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON
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András Székely

Director of the Vékenen Health Psychology Foundation (Hungary)
Head of Policy Analysis at the Maria Kopp Institute for Demography and Families (KINCS)

Healthy and Active Ageing, Intergenerational Solidarity, and Meeting the Needs of the Elderly
in Vulnerable Situations

In an aging society, it is imperative to prioritize healthy and active ageing, foster intergenerational solidarity, and address the needs of vulnerable elderly individuals. This text explores comprehensive strategies and initiatives aimed at promoting a fulfilling and supportive environment for the elderly, encouraging active engagement, and fostering connections between different generations.

Promoting Healthy and Active Ageing

To foster healthy and active ageing, a multifaceted approach is required. First and foremost, preventive healthcare measures should be emphasized, with a focus on regular health check-ups and screenings. Access to quality healthcare services, including geriatric care and specialized treatments, is essential. Promoting a healthy lifestyle is another crucial aspect, with an emphasis on regular physical activity, balanced nutrition, and mental well-being. Community-based programs, such as exercise classes, wellness workshops, and health education sessions, can play a pivotal role in engaging and empowering older adults. By creating an environment that encourages active ageing, we can enhance the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of the elderly.

Fostering Intergenerational Solidarity

Intergenerational solidarity is crucial for building cohesive and inclusive societies. Initiatives that promote interactions between different age groups are key to fostering mutual understanding, respect, and support. Intergenerational mentoring programs, where older adults share their knowledge and skills with younger generations, can bridge the generational gap and create meaningful connections. Shared learning activities, such as language exchanges, art workshops, or technology training, provide opportunities for diverse generations to learn from each other. Community projects that bring together people of

different ages, such as gardening initiatives or volunteering programs, promote a sense of belonging and purpose for both the elderly and younger generations. By nurturing intergenerational connections, we can break down stereotypes, combat ageism, and build stronger communities.

[Meeting the Needs of the Elderly in Vulnerable Situations](#)

Addressing the needs of elderly individuals in vulnerable situations requires targeted interventions and comprehensive support systems. It is crucial to identify and reach out to those who may be at risk, such as elderly individuals living in poverty, facing social isolation, or experiencing health challenges. Community outreach programs, social services, and collaboration with relevant stakeholders can help ensure that vulnerable elderly individuals receive the necessary care and support. Home-based care services, including home healthcare and assistance with daily activities, enable elderly individuals to age in place and maintain their independence. Improving accessibility to transportation, adapting public spaces to accommodate the needs of older adults, and implementing age-friendly policies contribute to their overall well-being. Financial security is also paramount, with the implementation of pension schemes, subsidies, and social assistance programs to alleviate economic burdens and ensure a dignified life for all elderly individuals.

[How Younger Generations Can Support the Elderly: Building Bridges of Care and Connection](#)

Younger generations have a unique opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of the elderly. By providing emotional support, assisting with daily activities, bridging the digital divide, advocating for their rights, and promoting intergenerational learning, they can create meaningful connections and enhance the well-being of older adults. Embracing intergenerational relationships and actively engaging in acts of care and support builds a more compassionate and inclusive society where all generations can thrive together.

[Emotional Support and Companionship](#)

One of the most valuable ways younger generations can support the elderly is by offering emotional support and companionship. Spending quality time with older adults, engaging in conversations, listening to their stories, and providing a genuine presence can make a significant difference in their lives. Simple acts of kindness, such as regular visits, phone calls, or sending thoughtful messages, can combat feelings of loneliness and isolation, boosting the emotional well-being of older adults.

[Assistance with Daily Activities](#)

Many older adults may require assistance with daily activities due to physical limitations or health conditions. Younger generations can offer practical support by helping with tasks such as grocery shopping, meal preparation, house cleaning, or running errands. This kind of assistance enables older adults to maintain their independence, stay engaged in their communities, and continue living in their own homes for as long as possible.

Technological Support and Digital Inclusion

In today's digital age, technological literacy is increasingly important. Younger generations can play a vital role in bridging the digital divide by providing technological support and training to older adults. Assisting them in learning how to use smartphones, computers, and other devices can enhance their connectivity, enable access to online resources, and facilitate communication with loved ones. By promoting digital inclusion, younger generations empower older adults to stay connected and engaged in the modern world.

Advocacy and Empowerment

Younger generations can advocate for the rights and needs of older adults within their communities and society at large. This includes raising awareness about issues such as elder abuse, ageism, and social isolation. By speaking out against discrimination and promoting inclusive policies, younger generations can help create an environment that respects and values the contributions of older adults. Empowering older adults to have a voice and actively involving them in decision-making processes ensures that their perspectives and needs are considered and respected.

Intergenerational Learning and Skill Sharing

Younger generations have valuable skills, knowledge, and experiences that can be shared with older adults. From teaching new technologies to sharing hobbies, interests, and talents, intergenerational learning enriches the lives of both parties involved. Younger individuals can also learn from the wisdom and experiences of older adults, fostering mutual respect, understanding, and appreciation.

Dementia- a specific cause for vulnerability

Dementia is a pressing concern in the context of global ageing, particularly in developing countries. The updated estimates of the global prevalence, incidence, and costs of dementia indicate a rising trend. The number of older people, aged 60 years and above, is rapidly increasing worldwide, driven by rising life expectancy and the associated higher prevalence of chronic diseases like dementia. However, the burden is not evenly distributed across countries, with lower-middle and low-income countries projected to experience significantly higher increases in their older populations compared to higher-income countries. These developing countries often face challenges in meeting the healthcare and social care needs of their ageing populations due to limited economic and human resources. They grapple with a "double burden" of high rates of infectious diseases alongside a growing epidemic of non-communicable diseases. Despite economic growth, many rapidly developing countries have struggled to establish comprehensive and effective social protection systems, leaving older individuals at risk of inadequate income and limited access to healthcare and social services. Inequities in income distribution often persist, with older people being among the least likely to benefit directly from national economic development efforts. Addressing these disparities and strengthening support systems are crucial for ensuring the well-being and quality of life of older individuals affected by dementia in developing countries.¹

The global estimates of the number of people living with dementia were updated in December 2017 for the launch of the World Health Organization's Global Dementia Observatory. These updated estimates took into account the age- and sex-specific prevalence of dementia for each region and applied them to the UN population estimates for 2015 and population projections until 2050. The increase in the projected numbers of people living with dementia from the 2015 estimates is primarily due to revised UN population estimates and updated methodologies used for certain regions, rather than changes in the prevalence of dementia itself. More details about the methodology and further discussion can be found in the World Alzheimer Report 2015.

Region	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Asia and Australia	24.28	29.23	35.28	42.71	51.37	60.90	71.16	81.75
Europe	11.55	12.71	13.97	15.33	16.98	18.82	20.35	21.64
The Americas	9.62	11.42	13.60	16.33	19.70	23.54	27.59	31.63
Africa	4.47	5.30	6.34	7.67	9.40	11.57	14.18	17.22
World	49.92	58.66	69.20	82.05	97.45	114.83	133.28	152.24

<https://www.alzint.org/resource/numbers-of-people-with-dementia-worldwide/>

Dementia in the family

Dealing with dementia within a family can be an immense challenge. It profoundly impacts not only the person with dementia but also their immediate family members. Papastavrou's studyⁱⁱ examined the burden of caregiving for family members of individuals with dementia, its impact on the mental health of primary caregivers, and the coping strategies employed by families to manage the stresses of caregiving. The study revealed that a significant majority (68.02%) of caregivers experienced high levels of burden, and 65% exhibited symptoms of depression. The level of burden experienced by caregivers was found to be influenced by factors such as the patient's psychopathology and the caregiver's sex, income, and level of education. Interestingly, whether the patients lived in the community or in institutions did not result in a statistically significant difference in the level of burden or depression reported by the caregivers. Caregivers who reported higher levels of burden tended to utilize

emotional-focused coping strategies, while those who experienced less burden were more likely to adopt problem-solving approaches when faced with caregiving demands.

Witnessing

One of the primary difficulties is witnessing the gradual decline of a loved one's cognitive and physical abilities. It can be emotionally distressing and heartbreaking to see someone you care about struggle with memory loss, confusion, and difficulty communicating. Family members often experience a sense of grief and loss as they witness their loved one's personality and identity being eroded by the disease.

Caregiving

The burden of caregiving can also take a toll on family members. Caring for a person with dementia requires significant time, energy, and patience. The responsibility of managing medications, assisting with daily activities, and ensuring a safe environment can be overwhelming, especially as the disease progresses and the care needs become more complex. This added responsibility may disrupt the daily routines and personal lives of family members, leading to increased stress and fatigue.

Emotional and psychological effects

The emotional and psychological impact on family members should not be underestimated. The constant unpredictability of dementia symptoms and behaviors can create tension, confusion, and frustration within the family dynamic. Feelings of guilt, resentment, and even isolation may arise as family members navigate the challenges of providing care while balancing their own needs and responsibilities. The emotional strain can lead to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and burnout among family caregivers.

Financial implications

Financial implications are another significant concern. Dementia often requires long-term care and specialized services, which can place a significant financial burden on the family. Expenses related to medical care, medications, in-home assistance, or residential care facilities can quickly accumulate, putting additional strain on the family's financial resources. Making difficult decisions about financial management and future care arrangements adds another layer of stress and uncertainty.

Relatives

Moreover, the impact of dementia extends beyond the immediate family. Relatives and close friends may also experience a sense of loss and struggle with how to best support both the person with dementia and the family members. Relationships may become strained as the dynamics shift and communication becomes more challenging.

Community based programs in prevention- Establishing Quality and Affordable Community-Based and Institutional Care Services in the Absence of Family Support

In situations where families are unable to provide care for their loved ones, it is crucial to ensure the availability of quality and affordable community-based and institutional care

services. This text examines strategies and approaches to address this challenge, focusing on the development of comprehensive care systems that meet the diverse needs of individuals when familial support is lacking.

Strengthening Community-Based Care Services

Collaboration and Partnerships

Forge partnerships between governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and community stakeholders to establish a robust network of community-based care services. By pooling resources and expertise, these collaborations can enhance service delivery, optimize resource allocation, and improve the quality of care provided.

Care Assessment and Planning

Implement thorough assessments of individuals' care needs to determine appropriate services and support. This process involves evaluating physical, cognitive, and emotional requirements, as well as social and environmental factors. Based on the assessment, personalized care plans can be developed to address specific needs and preferences.

Home-Based Care

Prioritize the development of home-based care services that enable individuals to receive necessary assistance within the comfort of their own homes. These services may include home healthcare, personal care assistance, medication management, and meal delivery. Emphasize training and support for caregivers to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to provide high-quality care.

Establishing Affordable Institutional Care

Diversifying Care Options

Develop a range of institutional care options, such as assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and specialized care centres, to cater to different needs and preferences. Ensure that these facilities meet quality standards and provide comprehensive services, including medical care, social activities, and emotional support.

Financial Assistance

Implement programs and policies that offer financial support to individuals who cannot afford institutional care services. This may include subsidies, sliding-scale payment options, or public funding mechanisms. Collaborate with insurance providers and government agencies to explore affordable insurance coverage options specifically designed for long-term care.

Quality Assurance

Establish regulatory frameworks and monitoring systems to ensure that institutional care services meet defined standards of quality, safety, and resident well-being. Regular

inspections, staff training requirements, and complaint resolution mechanisms contribute to maintaining a high level of care and accountability within these settings.

Promoting Community Engagement and Support

Ensuring the availability of quality and affordable community-based and institutional care services when family support is absent requires a multifaceted approach. By strengthening community-based care services, establishing affordable institutional care options, and promoting community engagement and support, comprehensive care systems can be developed. Collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-profit organizations, and community members, is essential for the successful implementation of these strategies. Ultimately, these efforts aim to provide individuals in need of care with the support, dignity, and quality of life they deserve.

Volunteer Programs

Develop volunteer programs that involve community members in providing companionship, emotional support, and assistance to individuals in need of care. Volunteers can offer respite care for family caregivers, engage in social activities with older adults, or provide transportation services.

Support Networks

Create support networks and peer groups where individuals and families facing similar care challenges can share experiences, knowledge, and resources. These networks offer emotional support, information sharing, and practical guidance, helping to alleviate the burden of care.

Educational Initiatives

Offer educational programs and workshops to equip individuals and families with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the complexities of long-term care. Topics may include understanding care options, managing finances, advocating for quality care, and self-care for caregivers.

How to use community healthcare in dementia

By utilizing community healthcare in dementia care, individuals living with dementia can receive comprehensive support, maintain a sense of belonging within their community, and experience an improved quality of life. It is important to prioritize collaboration, education, and the development of specialized services to meet the unique needs of individuals with dementia and their caregivers.

Awareness raising

Raise awareness and educate the community about dementia, its symptoms, and challenges faced by individuals living with dementia and their caregivers. Increase awareness to reduce stigma and create a dementia-friendly environment.

Collaborate with healthcare professionals

Build strong partnerships with healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, geriatric specialists, and social workers. Collaborate to develop comprehensive care plans and ensure coordinated support for individuals with dementia.

Establish dementia-friendly services

Create dementia-friendly services within the community, such as memory clinics, specialized dementia assessment centres, and day care programs. These services can provide early diagnosis, support in managing symptoms, and respite for caregivers.

Support groups and education programs

Organize support groups and educational programs for individuals with dementia and their families. These can offer information, emotional support, and practical strategies for managing daily challenges associated with dementia.

Train community healthcare providers

Provide specialized training for healthcare professionals, home care aides, and volunteers who interact with individuals living with dementia. Training should focus on dementia awareness, communication techniques, behavior management, and person-centred care.

Home-based care services

Facilitate home-based healthcare services for individuals with dementia who prefer to remain in their own homes. These services can include medical care, assistance with daily activities, safety assessments, and home modifications to promote independence and safety.

Respite care and caregiver support

Offer respite care services to give caregivers temporary relief from their caregiving responsibilities. Additionally, provide support and resources for caregivers, including counselling, education, and respite care options.

Promote social engagement and recreational activities

Encourage participation in social and recreational activities tailored for individuals with dementia. This can include memory cafes, art therapy programs, music therapy, and intergenerational activities to promote socialization and cognitive stimulation.

Foster community inclusion

Promote community inclusion by collaborating with local businesses, organizations, and community centres to create dementia-friendly spaces. Encourage businesses to train their staff to better understand and assist individuals with dementia.

Continuous evaluation and improvement

Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of community healthcare services for individuals with dementia. Seek feedback from individuals with dementia, their families, and healthcare providers to identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments.

ⁱ Prince, M., Wimo, A., Guerchet, M., Ali, G. C., Wu, Y. T., & Prina, M. (2015). World Alzheimer Report 2015: The Global Impact of Dementia: An Analysis of Prevalence, Incidence, Cost and Trends. Alzheimer's Disease International. <https://www.alz.co.uk/research/WorldAlzheimerReport2015.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Papastavrou, E., Kalokerinou, A., Papacostas, S.S., Tsangari, H. and Sourtzi, P. (2007), Caring for a relative with dementia: family caregiver burden. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 58: 446-457. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04250.x>