



Monday March 9, 2009
11:00 to 12.30

Lyon Convention Center
France

AGING IN THE BIG CITY

Moderator

- **Claude Feuerstein**, Director, Grenoble Institut de Neurosciences, France

Speakers

- **Robert Butler**, President and CEO, International Longevity Center, USA
- **Jean-Claude Marian**, CEO, ORPEA, France
- **Miroslav Radman**, Professor, INSERM, France
- **Victor Rodwin**, Professor, University of New York, USA

Summary

- The purpose of this session is to discuss the challenges of managing health for an aging population.
- Two different views prevail when dealing about an aging world population:
- The first one talks of the burden of aging. Its strongest representative being Pete Peterson (writer of the Book Grey Dawn: The Global aging crisis) who sees aging as having a stronger detrimental effect than climate change or nuclear proliferation...
- The second view is a more optimistic one and sees aging as human mankind's greatest accomplishment.
- In both cases, cities will have to be reshaped to cater for a growing population of elderly people.
- Over the last 30 years, people have gained 3 months of life expectancy per year thanks to Medicine, Molecular Biology, Increased Literacy, and improved basic services such as Sanitation thanks to simple measures such as the separation of sewage from drinking water.
- Japan and France have seen the biggest gains in life expectancy. People are living longer as they are not dying too early.
- This does not occur across species. Several species experience rapid biological decline leading to death once they stop being able to reproduce. The mechanism of decay prevention is switched off making biologists wonder whether it is possible to cheat the body. Nature might have the answer by providing insight into the basic mechanisms determining life length.
- However, a distinction must be made between life expectancy, which could continue to increase (although it has stopped in some countries such as the Netherlands and the USA in particular for women), and life span.



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BioVision 2009 session reporting

- Higher life expectancy leads to an increase in cognitive disorders. Being a cognitively impaired person living in a city can result in depression which can be worsened by poverty.
- Such impairments increase exponentially the risk of death after the age of 65 (doubling every 8 years). By prolonging life, a higher percentage of the population will suffer from such impairments.
- Genetics and life style can delay the aging process as 25 % is inherited and 75% is left up to us and sensitive therefore to factors such as dieting, exercise, etc.
- The question being, as we are going to get old where should it happen?
- Census data in the US reveals that most people age where they have lived. Very few (around 3% in each case) go into nursing homes or assisted homes. Approximately 94% of the people grow old in the neighbourhoods where they have lived.
- It is more important to look at what is than what should be. Approaching the problem of aging in the cities mustn't be done in a utopian manner as people predominantly remain in their environments. Research must be encouraged to focus on all the facets of aging in a city.
- In major cities (London, Paris and New York), current studies show that life expectancy is higher (Tokyo being the only exception in this case). Aging gracefully generally depends on the neighbourhood and the disposable income
- However, research does not conclusively show whether old people should live in dedicated areas with better services or be spread in transgenerational neighbourhoods with richer interactions (being grouped might provide more local political clout but in can also lead to ghettos).
- In France, for example, the 15% of the over 85 years old go into a nursing facility. The age of becoming dependant has increased.
- Authorities want to promote as much as possible homecare to minimise costs. However, once disorientation pathologies set in people become dependent hence requiring increased care.
- By 2020, as 20% of the population will be over 65 years old there is a risk of having cities with a lot of disoriented people on the streets.
- Disorientation is not the only pathology observed amongst aging populations. Increases in chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity also require special units.
- An important answer to the problem is better prevention for chronic diseases. Such prevention must start early on. Key ailments such as osteoporosis can be avoided through better prevention during childhood.

Quotes

"Aging is mankind's biggest accomplishment."

Robert Butler

"Before we were killed before our life reached its peak."

Robert Butler

"Problems in late life are generated early periods of life."

Robert Butler

"Some species die when they stop being able to reproduce. The mechanism of preservation is switched off. Can we cheat the body?"

Jean-Claude Marian

"The combination of increased longevity coupled with the decrease in fertility will result in population aging."

Victor Rodwin

"Most people age in place."

Victor Rodwin

"The quality of aging depends on the neighbourhood and the available income."

Victor Rodwin

"Aging is a continuum. It is better for people to stay at home. At a certain level of dependency, they have to go into an institution."

Jean-Claude Marian