

Foreword

Building, Integrating, and Sharing Our Aging Society: Improving Older Adults' Health Together

This year marks the 20th anniversary of China becoming an aging society and the follow-up year of the 30th International Year of Older Persons. The key policy of active response to population aging has been elevated to a national strategy (1). Thus, now is an important time for *China CDC Weekly* to publish a series of studies on health status and ways to improve the health of older Chinese adults.

Population aging is a common global trend and a major social change happening in China. Developed countries have the most rapidly aging populations. Historically, after France became the first country to become an aging society, other Western and Northern European countries became aging societies. By the 1970s, almost all developed countries were aging societies. Although later than that of developed countries, many developing countries' population became aging and at a faster per-country pace, potentially leading to future global trends toward population aging.

The United Nations' *World Population Prospects 2019* predicts that by 2050, global per capita life expectancy will increase to 77.1 years and that 16% of the world's population will be 65 years of age or older (2). In the year 2000, there were 130 million adults aged 60 and above in China — 10.1% of the population. In 2010, this number increased to 180 million, representing 13.3% of the population. The most recent data are from the Seventh National Population Census and show that the number of older adults increased to 260 million in 2020, accounting for 18.7% of the total population (3).

The issue of aging societies has been receiving sustained and widespread global attention from policymakers, researchers, and social organizations. This academic attention gives rise to conceptual frameworks for theoretical explanations of aging societies and practical life-course pathways, including productive aging, successful aging, healthy aging, and active aging. Health is a consistent, essential theme of these conceptual frameworks. Definitions, classifications, and determinants of health of older adults are constantly being updated and developed over time. In the past, people narrowly thought that older adults could spend their remaining lives in comfort as long as they were physically healthy. Later, people gradually realized that the mental health is equally important, and nowadays, in addition to physical and mental health, older adults' social capabilities and social capital are also being emphasized.

Aging is an irreversible, natural phenomenon that everyone will experience. Population aging is an inevitable product of socioeconomic development. To actively cope with population aging, we need to take the initiative and seize opportunities to prevent risks and turn crises into opportunities. Responses to population aging require joint effort and conscientious action of the whole society, adhering to basic principles of everyone's responsibility and enjoyment, and forming a good atmosphere for older adults, families, communities, and governments to participate together.

Establishment of an aging society has been integrated into policy systems and, since 1982, has become a focus of programs on aging in the United Nations (UN) (4). The year 1999 was designated as the International Year of Older Persons. The UN aging conference that year adopted the theme, "*A Society for All Ages*", meaning a society in which "every member with authority, autonomy, and responsibility" plays an active role. By adding the concept of "a society for all ages" to "a society for all", the strategy becomes significantly more comprehensive and wide-ranging (5).

This issue of *China CDC Weekly* contributes important evidence and promotes discussion on aging and health on the International Day of Older Persons. Our research team evaluated the health status of older adults and explored strategies for improving their health status. The first paper describes how social participation can prevent older adults injured by falling from developing depressive symptoms (6). The second paper is about the oral health status of older adults and explores the role of good oral health for alleviating depressive symptoms (7). The third paper discusses the supply and demand of home-based healthcare services for older adults in China (8). Together, these

three studies present empirical evidence to assist building, integrating, and sharing today's aging society.

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