

Population aging crisis may have been overestimated

November 13 2013



(HealthDay)—Use of an alternative measure for assessing the number of dependent older people suggests that the population aging crisis may have been overestimated, according to an analysis published online Nov. 12 in *BMJ*.

Noting that the standard indicator of population aging is the old age dependency ratio, or the number of people of state pension age, divided by the number of working age adults, Jeroen Spijker and John MacInnes, Ph.D., from the University of Edinburgh in the United Kingdom, first propose an alternative measure to assess the number of dependent [older people](#) and then discuss the implications for [public health](#).

The authors suggest that remaining life expectancy is more important

than age in terms of health-related attitudes and behaviors. Due to increasing life expectancy, many older people are healthier and fitter than their peers in earlier cohorts. Using a remaining life expectancy of ≤ 15 years as the threshold for dependency, there has been a decrease in dependency by more than one-third in the past forty years. Furthermore, the real elderly dependency ratio is set to decrease further and then stabilize around the current level.

"Medical staff will need to stay alert to the changing relation between 'old' and 'age' as [life expectancy](#) continues to increase and the typical onset of senescence and its associated morbidities is delayed," the authors write.

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Citation: Population aging crisis may have been overestimated (2013, November 13) retrieved 3 April 2024 from

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