

Researchers examine health and well-being of Chinese elderly

12 December 2013, by Robert Polner

Like much of the world, China is graying. In 2000, 90 million adults over age 65 lived there. By 2050, the total is expected to be 300 million, representing 30 percent of the country's population.

In some Chinese cities, like Shanghai, senior citizens already make up 30 percent of the residents.

Researchers from the Silver School of Social Work took a close look at the Chinese Longitudinal Health Longevity Survey (CLHLS) to identify key factors linked to [health](#) and well-being for senior citizens. The CLHLS was a collaborative effort between Duke University and Peking University founded upon face-to-face interviews with thousands of [elderly individuals](#) in mainland China from 1998 to 2008.

The analysis by professors Wen-Jui Han and Tazuko Shibusawa, "Trajectory of Physical Health, Cognitive Status, and Psychological Well-Being Among Chinese Elderly," was selected as the winner of the 2013 Nobuo Maeda International Research Award on behalf of the American Public Health Association (APHA). The award was presented at the APHA annual conference held in Boston in November.

Noting the fast-growing population of seniors in China, the Silver professors examined CLHLS longitudinal data and found it demonstrated that [senior citizens](#) who had relatively socioeconomic advantaged childhoods and who in later years engaged regularly in physical and leisure activities had significantly healthier well-being, their decline due to age slowed.

These correlations are true not just in China, but for much of a world where the population over age 65 is fast on the upswing, the researchers state.

Meanwhile, they write, the significant impact that circumstances experienced earlier in life can have

on one's health and emotional well-being in later life demonstrates the importance of programs and policies in promoting well-being for all generations.

"The findings of our study underscore the need for prevention and intervention programs that promote physical and leisure activity at local, national, and global levels," the paper concludes.

Provided by New York University

APA citation: Researchers examine health and well-being of Chinese elderly (2013, December 12) retrieved 24 October 2019 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-12-health-well-being-chinese-elderly.html>

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