

## EDITORIAL

## Enhancing Disability Free Life Expectancy Through Proactive Lifestyles

As growing numbers of older adults can expect lives characterized by longevity, the scientific community is challenged to understand those factors that can contribute to maintenance of good health and quality of life for the old-old. Prior research has focused on the importance of genetic factors, social inequalities and health care related influences on quality of life in old age. However, the role of proactive adaptations by older adults to enhance their own quality of life has only recently gained recognition. This special Hot Topics Issue of Open Longevity Science brings attention to this emerging trend. We do so by showcasing contributions by scientists from different disciplines using different theoretical lenses and research approaches to understand both self empowerment and services that can facilitate empowerment of the aged to take action on their own behalf.

Contributions to this issue include empirical studies of older adults and of service providers, focusing on the impact and facilitation of proactive action by elders. Articles included in this issue also offer conceptual frameworks and analyses that explore the potentials of personal actions, organizational interventions and systemic approaches to human "agency" in late life. These orientations also incorporate micro, mezzo and macro levels of analysis.

Lovegreen's paper [1] reports results of longitudinal research focusing on proactive residential moves undertaken by elders to enhance their person - environment fit. In a research report [2], Kahana, *et al.* examine the influence of patient initiative in interactions with primary care physicians. These behaviors may facilitate receipt of preventive medical advice and cancer screening recommendations. Force, *et al.* [3] surveyed directors of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) in the US to consider program innovation by service agencies related to prevention and to health promoting lifestyles that facilitate proactive aging.

Complementing nascent research on proactive aging are three papers that offer useful conceptual guidelines and analytic frameworks for understanding and supporting late life proactively. Seckin's paper [4] explores the potential of technology, and particularly the Internet, in facilitating information seeking, self care and health care partnerships by older patients and their physicians. Moving from the micro level of analysis to the mezzo level, Parry and Coleman [5] consider the potential of health coaching in providing patient centered interventions to help hospitalized elders play a more proactive role in coping with transfers to other rehabilitation or long term care institutional settings. Finally Pfaff, *et al.* [6] address macro level issues as they offer an analytic framework for understanding how countervailing values of standardization and individualization in health care may be integrated to foster late life proactivity through individualized standardization.

I am delighted to be able to share with the scientific community these fresh ideas and thought provoking insights. I am hopeful that this special issue of Open Longevity Science will generate debate and further conceptual and empirical developments that can elucidate the role of proactivity in promoting health and well-being among the old.

## REFERENCES

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