Ageing and Learning Disability – The Health Care Implications

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Challenge of Population Ageing

Image: World Population Growth, Actual and Projected, 1950-2050

- **United Nations Projections**
  - High
  - Medium
  - Low

- **Population Growth Over Time**
  - 3 Billion (1960)
  - 6 Billion (1999)

- **Year Range**
  - 1950 to 2050

Graph showing the projected growth of the world population from 1950 to 2050, with high, medium, and low projections.
Speed of Population Ageing

Number of years from 7% to 14%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3. Life expectancy at birth: world and development regions, 1950-2050
Projected Survival Curve of World Population
Ageing Process and Learning Disabilities

- Improvements in Medicine, Science, Public Health, Technology and Education has led to increasing longevity in human beings
- These factors have also contributed to increasing the life expectancy of people with learning disabilities
Learning Disabilities and Life Expectancy

- UK study showed that people with learning disabilities are also living longer but their life expectancy as a group is lower than that of the general population.

- **General Population**
  - Male 76, Female 80

- **Learning Disabilities**
  - Male 66, Female 71
Factors affecting the survival of learning disabilities

- Employment
- Genetic Syndromes
- Degree of disabilities
- More susceptible to health related problems such as cardiovascular, respiratory, motility and gastrointestinal conditions, epilepsy, obesity, mental health problems, hearing and visual impairment
Health Problems associated with some genetic syndromes

- Down syndrome
  - Congenital heart defects, obesity, hypothyroidism, dental and ophthalmic conditions, Alzheimer disease

- Prader-Willi syndrome
  - Cardiovascular disease and diabetes due to obesity, joint problems, sleep disturbances
Impact of Premature Ageing in Learning Disabilities

- Downs syndrome – earlier onset of Alzheimer disease (22% in those over 40 and 56% in those over 60)
Health needs of older people with learning disabilities

- Higher rate of age related conditions
- Cardiovascular and respiratory disorders, arthritis, hypertension, urinary incontinence, immobility, hearing impairment and cerebrovascular disease
- Important contributing factor of life style
- More likely of an unhealthy lifestyle that contribute to the development of physical problems in older age
- Higher rates of psychiatric disorders – anxiety, depression, delusion disorders and dementia
Characteristics of Diseases in Old Age

- Multiple pathology
- Atypical Presentation, non-specific presentation
- Prevalence of chronic and degenerative conditions
- Combination of physical, functional, mental and social problems
- Special Hazards during acute illnesses
The “I’s” of Geriatrics

- Immobility
- Incontinence
- Instability
- Intellectual decline
- Immune Deficiency
- Iatrogenesis
- Isolation
- Insomnia
- Impaired eyes/ears
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Residential Home (LTC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthritis</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye Diseases</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart Diseases</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroke</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dementia</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fracture</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thematic Household Survey No 21, October 2005, Census and Statistic Department, HK
Spectrum of Health Care Need of Older People

- Preventive Care
- Curative Care
  - Primary care
  - Secondary and Tertiary care
- Rehabilitation
- Community Support
- Long Term Care
- Palliative Care / End of Life Care
Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment

- The simultaneous presence of many problems (physical, psychological and social) and the unmet health care needs facing the older patient require an assessment more complex than can realistically be provided by a routine diagnostic examination.

- CGA offers a health care model that integrates medical care with social support.
Preventive Care

- Health Promotion
- Disease Prevention
- Disability Postponement
Curative Care

- Primary Care
- Secondary Care
  - Specialist Clinics
- Tertiary Care
Rehabilitation

- Institutional based rehabilitation units
- Day hospitals
- Dormiciliary Rehabilitation Services
Community Support Services

- Day Care Services
- Home Help Services
- Meal Services
- Community Nursing Services
- Respite Care
Long Term Care

- Long Stay Care
- Alternatives to Residential Care
  - Home Support Programmes
Issues of access to health services for older people with learning disabilities

- Attitudinal
- Communication
- Awareness
- Services
- Behavioral issues
- Physical
Issues of ageing in Learning Disabilities

- Who is the carer? Parent or reverse
- Older People with Learning Disabilities will outlive their parents who used to be their main carer
- Conventional Old Age Facilities may not understand the special needs of older people with learning disabilities
- Facilities specializing in care of Learning Disabilities may not have the necessary medical expertise to look out for the ageing problems in older people with Learning Disabilities
Implications in future

- Health Care Facilities for Older People with Learning Disabilities
- Changing of existing specialized facilities to cater for Older People with Learning Disabilities
- The Need of training and education for the professional carers and the informal carers
Thank you