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ABSTRACT 190

Title : « *Aging Well* » : A trans-disciplinary study on representation of aging across cultures

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Background: The topic of the elderly and the related aging process has become of high interest worldwide. But despite this global agreement and beyond the existing public definitions mainly based on chronological age and related health state, it's still difficult to know who the elderly people we are talking about are.

Objectives: We propose to investigate the content of the definition of “the elderly” and of the related aging process, across cultures, as perceived by lay people. We will stress the shared characteristics but we will also mention the cultural specificities of these representations. They will be illustrated via the individual's relation to food.

Methods: The study is trans-disciplinary (anthropology and social-psychology), using quantitative (350 questionnaires per country) and qualitative methods (24 one-on-one in depth interviews per country), in four countries (France, Germany, China, Russia). Participants ranged from 45-75-year-old.

Results: The definition of “elderly” across cultures has two components: one relates to cultural properties, the other to biological characteristics. However, the content of each component is culturally specific.

Beyond worrying about serious diseases such as Alzheimer's, individual concerns are mainly linked to their daily routine, including relation to food.

Conclusion: From 45 to 75 years old, surprisingly, individuals never consider themselves as the elderly they are talking about. In addition, the way they think about positive aging isn't only linked to health state or to happiness but is driven by the more holistic feeling of Aging Well. The nutritional dimension of food products is considered by consumers when it comes to aging prevention. But the social dimension of food practices is of utmost importance. These elements should be taken into account when addressing public food and health recommendations to people for expecting any individual's pro-active attitude.