



1st World Congress on Healthy Ageing, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

ABSTRACT 99

Life course socio-economic status and obesity among older Singaporeans

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Keywords: Socio-economic status, Life course, Obesity.

Background: Little is known about the association between life course socio-economic status (SES) and obesity in the elderly in general, and among Asian elderly in particular.

Objectives: To elucidate the association between life course SES and obesity among older Singaporeans (aged 60+) in the context of the accumulation of risk (AR), social mobility (SM) and sensitive periods (SP) life course SES-adult health outcome frameworks.

Methods: Obesity (Body Mass Index > 27.5 kg/m²; Asian classification) was assessed for 4193 older Singaporeans. Dichotomous indicators of childhood SES (family financial status while growing up), adult SES (education) and older adult SES (housing type) were used to operationalize the AR (cumulative socio-economic disadvantage score), SM (eight trajectories using SES at the three different ages) and SP (independent effect of each SES indicator) frameworks.

Results: While both high childhood SES and low adult SES were associated with significantly higher odds of older adult obesity, older adult SES was not (SP framework). There was no association between cumulative socio-economic disadvantage (AR framework) and older adult obesity. Those moving up the SES ladder from childhood to adulthood had the lowest prevalence of older adult obesity, while those moving down had the highest prevalence (SM framework).

Conclusions: The association of life course SES with older adult obesity is context specific, and the three frameworks complement each other and may be simultaneously utilized to gain a better understanding of this association.