



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

ABSTRACT 235

Population Aging in Asia: Challenges to Family Support for Ensuring a Healthy Aging Lifecourse

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System examples located at: www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACDA/das.html

Gerontology, Family Support, Health

INTRODUCTION: A growing elderly population impacts health care systems, family support networks, pensions, and systems of social support. The argument that the family will care for the aged has proved a poor planning tool while Western experiences reflect the difficulty of maintaining national retirement schemes.

OBJECTIVE: This paper examines the inter-relationships of modernization, development and the demographic transition on long term planning for the care of elderly populations in Asia. The paper reviews the solutions attempted by nations such as South Korea, Singapore and Japan, but our focus is on challenges facing nations where the elderly make up no more than 5% of the total population; including Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam. These nations face different national circumstances but they share the advantage of time; their aged populations remain small enough to allow them to plan for the future.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION: We employ the increased availability of census and survey data to provide a more accurate picture of the future growth of elderly populations in Asia and to explore changing patterns in family support, coresidence and economic autonomy among the aged. Potential strengths and weaknesses of retirement and care-provision alternatives are then related to the identified patterns of change and we suggest core themes that can be used to positively impact national level policy development. Specifically, our analysis reflects the benefits of investing in family systems as opposed to individual systems of retirement.

CONCLUSION: While there is no one best answer for a region as diverse as Asia there are more promising alternatives than social security and provident plans which currently face insolvency in many Western nations. This paper builds on a growing body of research in this field and explores issues of specific interest to many Asian governments now facing the challenge of caring for a growing elderly population. (300 words)



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