

Forum: World Health Organisation

Issue: Measures around longevity and healthspan

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Introduction:

Implementing efficient strategies to improve general well-being has become a global priority in an age where health and longevity are top priorities. People and cultures are actively looking for ways to extend and improve life as a result of advances in medical research and an increasing focus on preventative healthcare.

Several strategies hold the potential of enhancing health and prolonging life expectancy, from adopting better lifestyles that include balanced nutrition and regular exercise to promoting mental wellness through mindfulness techniques. Advances in medical research and technology have transformed the healthcare industry by creating new opportunities for disease prevention, early disease detection, and individualised therapies. Accessible healthcare services, regulatory reforms, and public health efforts have a significant impact on fostering healthier communities.

These issues significantly influence policymakers and governments across diverse dimensions. Governments must allocate resources to healthcare, research, and infrastructure for longevity-related initiatives, while addressing social security and pension sustainability amid longer lifespans. Workforce dynamics may shift, necessitating policies supporting lifelong learning and combating age discrimination. The economic landscape could transform due to altered spending patterns and demand for specific services. Public health campaigns promoting healthy living and preventive measures become crucial and ethical and social considerations, like end-of-life care and resource distribution, require policy frameworks. Policymakers must navigate these multifaceted impacts to formulate holistic strategies that accommodate an ageing population's evolving needs and opportunities.

However, there are numerous challenges posed by extended lifespans. While increased longevity reflects improved healthcare and living standards, they also strain social, economic, and healthcare systems. Pension and social security programs may face sustainability issues due to a larger elderly population and healthcare systems might struggle to address age-related diseases and conditions, increasing healthcare costs. Addressing these challenges necessitates comprehensive policy reforms, including adjustments to retirement age and social safety nets, investments in preventive healthcare, and fostering intergenerational support systems. Balancing the benefits of increased longevity with its associated challenges requires a holistic approach to ensure the well-being of both older and younger generations.

Definition of Key Terms:

1. **Health:** a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. It encompasses the overall condition of an individual's body and mind and their ability to function effectively in daily life. Achieving and maintaining good health involves a balanced and harmonious interaction between various biological, psychological, and social factors
2. **Longevity:** the length or duration of a person's life. It is often used to describe the ability to live a long life or reach an advanced age. It is influenced by various factors, including genetics, lifestyle choices, environmental factors, access to healthcare, and overall well-being.
3. **Advancements in medical science:** the progress and innovations in medical research, technology, and treatments that have contributed to improving health outcomes and extending human lifespans.
4. **Living conditions:** the overall quality of life and environment in which people live, encompassing factors such as housing, access to clean water and sanitation, nutrition, and socioeconomic status.
5. **Preventative healthcare:** involves proactive measures such as regular screenings, vaccinations, healthy lifestyle promotion, and early disease detection. It aims to reduce the risk of illnesses, improve overall health, and

lessen the burden on healthcare systems by addressing health issues before they become more severe or costly to treat.

6. **Age-friendly infrastructure:** involves designing environments that accommodate the needs of older adults. It focuses on creating accessible and safe public spaces, transportation, and housing, fostering independence and social participation among seniors, and enhancing overall community well-being.

Background Information

Advancements in medical science and improvements in living conditions have led to a remarkable increase in human lifespans, giving rise to the significant issue of increasing health and longevity. This demographic shift towards longer lives has profound implications for societies worldwide. As the ageing population grows, it places strains on healthcare systems, requiring innovative approaches to meet the evolving medical and long-term care needs of older individuals.

While longer lifespans offer the potential for a fulfilling life in old age, they also bring challenges. The prevalence of chronic diseases and age-related conditions rises, necessitating effective preventive measures and improved management strategies. Financial systems and retirement plans must adapt to support longer periods of retirement.

Moreover, there are ethical considerations, including end-of-life care decisions and the right to make choices about one's health and medical treatments. Combating ageism and fostering positive attitudes towards ageing are essential to ensure an inclusive and supportive environment for the elderly.

Addressing the complexities of increasing health and longevity requires collaborative efforts from governments, healthcare professionals, communities, and individuals to create a sustainable and healthy future for all age groups.

Consequences

Poor healthcare and low life expectancy can have far-reaching consequences, impacting individuals, families, communities, and entire nations. Addressing these requires comprehensive and sustainable efforts to improve healthcare systems, enhance access to medical services, promote preventive care, and address the underlying social determinants of health. By investing in healthcare and prioritising the well-being of all citizens, societies can work towards achieving longer and healthier lives for their populations.

Increased mortality rates

In regions with poor healthcare infrastructure and limited access to medical services, preventable and treatable conditions often go untreated, leading to a surge in mortality rates. Lack of timely interventions and essential medications exacerbate the severity of illnesses, making them more challenging to manage and survive. For example, more than 70 percent of maternal deaths in Nigeria were caused due to lack of access to quality healthcare.

Reduced quality of life

The absence of proper healthcare leaves individuals suffering from untreated illnesses, chronic conditions, and disabilities, significantly compromising their overall quality of life. Without appropriate medical support, people experience prolonged pain, reduced mobility, and diminished physical and mental capacities, preventing them from engaging fully in social, professional, and personal activities.

Economic burden

Inadequate healthcare systems place a significant economic strain on societies. The costs associated with treating advanced and neglected diseases increase dramatically, further burdening already strained healthcare budgets. Moreover, reduced productivity and increased absenteeism due to illness contribute to economic losses, hindering overall growth and development. For example, in the United States of America, heart diseases and strokes lead to a \$147 billion dollar loss in productivity on the job per year.

Impacts of an increasing life expectancy

An increased life span has profound implications on various levels, with both positive and challenging impacts. From a societal perspective, longer life expectancy contributes to demographic shifts, resulting in an ageing population. While this represents an achievement in public health and medical advancements, it also poses challenges for pension systems, healthcare services, and social welfare programs. Governments and societies must adapt policies and resources to cater to the needs of a growing elderly population, ensuring access to quality healthcare and support services.

On an individual level, longer life spans provide more opportunities for personal growth, extended careers, and meaningful relationships with family and friends. Increased life expectancy also allows individuals to pursue lifelong learning and engage in activities that foster well-being and mental stimulation throughout their extended lives. However, it may also present financial challenges, as individuals may need to plan for longer retirement periods and the possibility of requiring long-term care.

Moreover, an ageing workforce may impact economic productivity, as older employees transition out of the workforce, potentially leading to skill gaps and labour shortages. At the same time, the wealth of knowledge and experience from an ageing workforce can contribute positively to mentoring younger generations and driving innovation.

In healthcare, an extended life span necessitates a greater focus on preventive medicine and management of chronic conditions, as the prevalence of age-related diseases increases. Healthcare systems must evolve to provide comprehensive geriatric care and promote healthy ageing to ensure a higher quality of life for the elderly.

There are severe ethical concerns raised about justice, equity, and human rights. Individuals' access to essential healthcare services, regardless of

socioeconomic status, is a fundamental ethical principle. Addressing disparities in healthcare access and improving living conditions are imperative to uphold ethical standards and ensure equitable opportunities for health and longevity.

Current Situation

Present statistics (as of 2022)

Country	Average Lifespan
France	82.5
United Kingdom	80.4
United States of America	77.3
China	77.1
Russia	73.2

Ongoing actions

Governments, healthcare organisations, and communities worldwide have been actively working to promote a healthier and longer life for their populations.

Preventive healthcare has been a key focus, with a growing emphasis on vaccinations, regular health screenings, and health education to detect and address health issues early. Public health campaigns have targeted prevalent health risks such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, encouraging healthier lifestyle choices and behaviours.

Advancements in medical research and technology continue to play a pivotal role in enhancing health outcomes. Precision medicine, gene therapies, and innovative treatments have the potential to revolutionise healthcare, providing personalised and more effective approaches to disease management.

Health disparity

Health disparities are a serious social problem that disproportionately impacts underprivileged people because of inadequate healthcare and low life expectancy. These discrepancies are a result of a number of interrelated causes, including systemic discrimination, limited access to healthcare services, economic inequality, and social determinants of health. Marginalised populations frequently have poorer incomes, education levels, and access to resources. These characteristics make it difficult for these communities to get appropriate healthcare, which leads to inadequate preventative measures and postponed treatments.

Lack of access to early screenings and preventive measures can result in chronic illnesses going untreated or being poorly managed, which lowers life expectancy among these people. Additionally, understaffed or inadequately equipped healthcare facilities in underprivileged communities may result in subpar treatment and poorer health outcomes. In addition, societal factors including housing conditions, food insecurity, and exposure to environmental hazards, contribute to poorer health in these communities.

Strain on healthcare infrastructure

The strain on healthcare infrastructure is a significant consequence of poor healthcare and low life expectancy, particularly in regions with limited resources and inadequate access to medical services. When healthcare systems are unable to meet the demand for healthcare services due to underfunding, shortages of medical professionals, or outdated facilities, it leads to several detrimental effects.

Long waiting times for medical appointments and treatments have become common in many countries, delaying necessary care and exacerbating health conditions. Patients may suffer from worsening illnesses, reducing the effectiveness of interventions and increasing healthcare costs in the long run.

Healthcare facilities are becoming overwhelmed, affecting the quality of care provided. Overburdened healthcare professionals may face burnout and struggle to deliver personalised attention and follow-up care to patients.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Interpharma

Interpharma Switzerland is an association representing the leading pharmaceutical research companies in Switzerland. Committed to advancing medical science and patient care, Interpharma members engage in extensive research and development activities. These companies invest significantly in innovative drug discovery, clinical trials, and cutting-edge technologies to address a wide range of medical conditions. Their research efforts aim to bring novel and effective medicines, therapies, and vaccines to the market, contributing to improved healthcare outcomes globally. Interpharma's dedication to research and development has made Switzerland a hub for pharmaceutical innovation, fostering collaborations between academia, healthcare professionals, and industry experts in the pursuit of medical advancements.

International Medical Health Organisation (IMHO)

IMHO is a nonprofit global health organisation that seeks to establish and enhance healthcare infrastructure and services in underserved areas of the world. A group of doctors and other experts came together to form IMHO with the goal of advancing world medicine and healthcare. The organisation gives communities the tools they need to create their own health systems and address local healthcare issues. To better reach and aid communities in need, it collaborates with national and international NGOs. Its efforts are concentrated on capacity building, health education and training, and primary and public healthcare.

Monaco

Monaco boasts one of the highest life expectancies globally, averaging around 89 to 90 years. The government has been actively engaged in efforts to enhance longevity and well-being among its population. This includes robust healthcare services, quality education, and advanced medical research facilities. Monaco has invested significantly in its healthcare infrastructure, ensuring accessible and

high-quality medical services for its residents. The government has also emphasised promoting a healthy lifestyle through awareness campaigns, fitness initiatives, and nutritious food options. Furthermore, the country's strong social support system and favourable living conditions contribute to the overall well-being of its citizens.

Chad

Chad has a relatively low life expectancy, averaging around 55 to 60 years due to various socio-economic challenges, healthcare accessibility issues, and high infant mortality rates. The Chadian government has been working to improve longevity by focusing on healthcare infrastructure development, increasing access to medical services in remote areas, and enhancing maternal and child health programs. Efforts have been made to address malnutrition and improve sanitation and hygiene practices to combat diseases that impact life expectancy. The government has also collaborated with international organisations and NGOs to implement healthcare initiatives aimed at improving overall well-being.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Global health and foreign policy: strengthening health system resilience through affordable health care for all, 14 December 2020 (**A/75/L.41**)
 - In addition to urging Member States to ensure that everyone has access to affordable health care, the resolution urged countries to increase resilience as a crucial component of their readiness for related catastrophes.
 - It also emphasised the need to keep an eye on how the pandemic is affecting the provision of healthcare services indirectly, recognized the contributions made by healthcare professionals during the pandemic, and urged Member States and others to support funding for the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-Accelerator) as well as the equitable distribution of vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics.
 - The resolution effectively led numerous countries around the world to provide free or subsidised COVID-19 vaccinations as well as to implement measures working towards improving the current system.

- Global health and foreign policy, 12 December 2012 (**A/RES/67/81**)
 - The resolution recommended to include universal health coverage in the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda in the context of global health challenges.
 - Member states were urged to understand the significance of providing universal coverage in their national health systems, particularly through primary healthcare and social protection mechanisms, in order to ensure that everyone, notably the poorest sectors of the population, has access to health services.
 - The resolution's actions have been effective in strengthening the healthcare of around the world. Many countries have taken steps to enact or strengthen legislation for affordable healthcare.

Possible Solutions

When crafting clauses aimed at enhancing longevity and extending lifespans, delegates should adopt a multifaceted approach that addresses key aspects of health, wellness, and social well-being. It is suggested to prioritise promoting accessible and affordable healthcare systems that provide preventive care, early diagnosis, and treatments for age-related illnesses. Delegates can also propose initiatives to raise public awareness about healthy lifestyles, focusing on balanced diets, regular physical activity, and stress management. Collaborative research efforts to advance medical technologies, such as regenerative medicine and personalised therapies, could be emphasised to counteract the effects of ageing. To ensure equitable longevity, delegates may also consider socioeconomic measures that enhance living standards, such as quality education, employment opportunities, and social safety nets.

Universal healthcare

A comprehensive and inclusive healthcare system ensures that all citizens, regardless of their financial situation, have access to necessary medical services. This approach promotes early detection and timely treatment, leading to improved health outcomes and increased life expectancy.

Promoting a healthy lifestyle

Public awareness campaigns and educational programs can encourage citizens to adopt healthier lifestyles, including balanced nutrition and regular physical activity. Reducing harmful habits like smoking and excessive alcohol consumption through increased tax rates can prevent numerous health conditions and enhance longevity.

Research and Innovation

Supporting medical research and technological advancements leads to the development of more effective treatments, diagnostic tools, and preventive strategies. Continued progress in these areas positively impacts healthcare and contributes to increased life expectancy.

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Useful links

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