

# Psychosocial Aspects of Aging, including Mental Well- being and Social Support

## Authors

- Asha Wettasinghe, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka
- KRM Chandrathilaka, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Kaveera Senanayake, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Sabela Rivas Neira, University of A Coruña, Spain
- Jamile Vivas Costa, University of A Coruña, Spain

## Consortium CAPAGE

- University of Applied Sciences FH JOANNEUM, Austria
- JAMK University of Applied Sciences, Finland
- Santa Maria Health School, Portugal
- University of A Coruña, Spain
- Eastern University, Sri Lanka
- General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Sri Lanka
- University of Colombo, Sri Lanka
- University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka
- University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
- University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka

# Lecture outcomes

- Explain major theories of psychosocial aging and their relevance to practice
- Analyze common social role transitions in late life and their psychological effects
- Identify the prevalence and risk factors of mental health conditions in older adults
- Discuss barriers to mental health care and strategies to overcome them
- Evaluate the role of social determinants and support systems in healthy aging
- Promote strengths-based approaches to enhance psychosocial well-being in older adults

# Theories of Psychosocial Aging

## Erikson's Stage: Integrity vs. Despair

- Developmental tasks and resolution
- Achieving ego integrity

## Disengagement Theory vs. Activity Theory

- Contrasting perspectives on social withdrawal
- Current evidence and limitations

## Continuity Theory

- Adaptation strategies based on past experiences
- Internal and external continuity

## Socioemotional Selectivity Theory

- Changing time perspective and its impact on goals
- Prioritization of emotionally meaningful activities

# Social Role Transitions in Later Life

## Retirement:

- Psychological impact
- Adaptation patterns
- Financial implications

## Widowhood:

- Gender differences in adjustment
- Grief trajectories in older adults

## Caregiving:

- Caregiver burden and stress
- Positive aspects of caregiving

## Grandparenthood:

- Contemporary roles and experiences
- Custodial grandparenting challenges

# Mental Health in Older Adults

## Prevalence

- Depression (7-15% in community settings; 20-30% in institutional care)
- Anxiety disorders (10-15%)
- Substance use disorders (growing prevalence)

# Mental Health in Older Adults

## Risk factors specific to older adults

- Physical comorbidities
- Polypharmacy
- Functional limitations
- Losses (relationship, independence, identity)

# Mental Health in Older Adults

## Barriers to mental health care

- Stigma and cohort attitudes
- Recognition challenges
- Access issues

# Depression in older Adults

## Presentation differences:

- More somatic complaints
- Less sadness reported
- Cognitive symptoms ("pseudodementia")

## Assessment considerations:

- Geriatric Depression Scale (short form)
- PHQ-9 adaptations for older adults

## Treatment approaches:

- Psychotherapy efficacy (CBT, PST, IPT)
- Pharmacotherapy considerations
- ECT role in treatment-resistant cases

# Anxiety Disorders in Late Life

## Common presentations:

- Generalized anxiety disorder
- Social anxiety in context of functional changes
- Health anxiety

## Assessment tools:

- Geriatric Anxiety Inventory (GAI)
- Rating Anxiety in Dementia (RAID) for cognitively impaired

## Treatment considerations:

- CBT adaptations for older adults
- Mindfulness and relaxation approaches
- Medication concerns (benzodiazepine risks)

# Social Determinants of Health in Aging

- Economic security
- Transportation access
- Digital divide
- Neighborhood characteristics

# Social Support Systems

## Types of social support:

- Emotional
- Informational
- Instrumental
- Appraisal

## Support network characteristics:

- Size vs. quality
- Composition changes with age

## Assessment approaches:

- Lubben Social Network Scale
- Medical Outcomes Study Social Support Survey

## Interventions to enhance support:

- Group-based programs
- Volunteer opportunities
- Technology-based solutions



Image source:

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.istockphoto.com%2Fillustrations%2Felderly-physical-therapy&psig=AOvVaw3R0uZnjfaGpPpYTUCeRFQy&ust=1759721530820000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBUQjRxqFwoTCKD3-eyPjJADFQAAAAAdAAAAABAE>

# Social Isolation and Loneliness

## Conceptual distinctions:

- Objective isolation vs. subjective loneliness
- Prevalence data (25-30% of older adults)

## Health impacts:

- Cardiovascular risk equivalent to smoking
- Cognitive decline acceleration
- Mortality risk increase (29%)

## Assessment tools:

- UCLA Loneliness Scale
- De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale

## Evidence-based interventions:

- LISTEN program
- Circle of Friends model
- Befriending initiatives

## Strengths-Based Approaches to Aging

### Positive psychology applications:

- Gratitude practices
- Meaning-focused interventions
- Character strengths utilization

### Resilience factors in late life:

- Adaptability
- Wisdom development
- Emotional regulation improvements

### Successful aging reconsidered:

- Subjective definitions
- Cultural variations

# Take home message

- Aging affects mental health through complex social, emotional, and environmental factors
- Social role transitions, stigma, and access issues contribute to mental health risks
- Recognizing and addressing social support needs is key to improving well-being
- Empowering older adults through strengths-based care can foster resilience and life satisfaction

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# THANK YOU!