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MORTALITY AND COMORBIDITY AMONG CENTENARIANS IN THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HEALTH CARE SYSTEM DURING 1997-2012

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The fastest growing segment of the aging population is the very old. Little is known about Veterans who live beyond 100 years of age. This study investigated the characteristics, comorbidities, and annual survival of veterans who were centenarians. Data from the Veterans Administration Health Care System included information on demographics, comorbidities, death, and duration of survival in the period from 1997-2012 for 2,432 subjects. Comorbidities include congestive heart failure (CHF), myocardial infarction (MI), peripheral vascular diseases (PVD), cerebrovascular diseases (CVD), cancers, diabetes, dementia, pulmonary, renal, and liver diseases. Survival analyses were conducted to assess the association of comorbidities and mortality using SAS 9.3. Centenarians were: 91% male, and 72% white. For subjects reaching their 100th birthday (n=2052), 718 died during the following year, 294 were lost to further follow-up or censored and 1040 survived beyond their 100th year. Cancer is the most frequent comorbidity in this population (12%), followed by chronic pulmonary diseases (9%), CVD (8%), diabetes (8%), chronic renal disease (8%); CHF (7%), PVD (7%), dementia (4%), MI (3%), and liver diseases (0.1%). White race was associated with increased risk of death (30%) compared to non-white races (RR: 1.3, 95% CI: 1.1-1.5). A diagnosis of dementia or congestive heart failure increased mortality risk by 40% (RR: 1.4; 95% CI: 1.1-1.8) and 22% (RR: 1.2; 95% CI: 1.0-1.5) respectively, adjusting for other covariates. Health care providers should be alerted to the risks associated with dementia and congestive heart failure among centenarian veterans.

TESTING A THEORETICAL MODEL OF ATTRIBUTED DIGNITY

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As individuals age the maintenance of dignity increases in importance. Although the research on dignity has increased dramatically over the last 10 years, the relationships among the attributes of dignity are not yet well understood. Dignity, an intrinsic quality of being human, is manifested by an attributed, dynamic cognitive component of the self comprised of a sense of self value, self in relation to others, perceived value from others, and behavior that demonstrates respect toward self and others. This definition of dignity has been operationalized as the Jacelon Attributed Dignity Scales (JADS). The JADS, an 18-item Likert-scaled instrument, has been found to be a valid and reliable measure of attributed dignity comprised of four factors, as indicated above. Using the data from 289 older adults aged 65-95 years, path modeling and regression were employed to test the hypothesized theoretical relationships among the factors of attributed dignity. The findings indicate evidence for bi-directional relationships between 'perceived value from others' and 'self in relation to others', 'self in relation to others' and 'behaving with respect', 'behaving with respect' and 'perceived value from others'. Uni-directional paths between 'self value' and 'self in relation to others', and 'self value and behaving with respect' were also supported. The hypothesized bi-directional relationship between 'self value' and 'perceived value from others' was not supported. Understanding the relationships among the factors of attributed dignity provides insight into the development of interventions to support and enhance elder's dignity to promote successful aging.

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND AGING THROUGH HEDONIC AND EUDAIMONIC PERSPECTIVES: A SCOPING REVIEW

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The phenomenon of ageing population has been primarily presented in terms of individual and social challenges and rarely is referred as an opportunity with benefits to older people and to the community. The study of aging from the lens of Positive Psychology allows this emphasis, looking beyond the decline normally associated with advancing of age and aiming to promote fulfilled and happy years in later life. In order to analyze the investment and statement of Positive Psychology research in the study of aging, a scoping review of the scientific literature published in the last 10 years was conducted. Our goal is to gather evidence on the key conceptual and empirical advancements that illustrate the commitment of Positive Psychology with aging issues. The literature search was conducted across the databases SCOPUS, Web of Science and INFOPsy, looking for papers having "Positive Psychology" and "Aging" (or similar words to aging) on their title, abstract or key-words. Simultaneously, aging related terms were searched in well-known journals of Positive Psychology. This strategy yielded 48 articles, 33 original scientific papers and 15 reviews for analysis. Main themes and study designs are presented and endpoints are discussed according to the hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives of the studies. In spite of the highest number of studies about happiness and life satisfaction (hedonic well-being), it is clear a growing interest on eudaimonic components of well-being in the last years, highlighting the human potential in advancing age and the importance of growth, self-actualization and meaning to a positive aging.

SUCCESSFUL AGING IN CENTENARIANS: THE RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

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Rowe and Kahn's (1997) version of successful aging defines avoidance of disease and disability, maintenance of high physical and cognitive function, and sustained engagement in social and productive activities as essential components of aging successfully. The applicability of this model in very advanced age has been questioned and the relative importance of these aspects to well-being is not properly established. In order to analyze the effect of Rowe and Kahn's criteria on both subjective (hedonic) and psychological (eudaimonic) well-being, 140 individuals with 100 and more years old from the Oporto Centenarian Study (PT100) were interviewed. The mean age of the sample was 101.18 (SD 1.59); 89.3% women, 76.4% widowed and 57.9% living in the community. The Positive Valuation of Life Scale (Lawton et al., 2001), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) and a questionnaire of health and social information were used for data collection. Descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted. Mean scores of well-being were 27.81 (SD=5.21) for VOL and 6.51 (SD=1.97) for SWLS. Of the successful aging criteria only social engagement, i.e. participation in social activities, had a significant association with psychological well-being (p<0.01). These results stress out the influence of activity and social engagement participation in the adaptation to the challenges of very old age. The characteristics, sort and distribution of activities practiced at this age should be further investigated in order to promote and/or adjust available social engagement opportunities.