

# Successful Aging in Philadelphia: Examining the Needs of the Geriatric Community

Mollie Woehling, Dr. Rickie Brawer

Center for Urban Health, Jefferson Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, PA

## INTRODUCTION

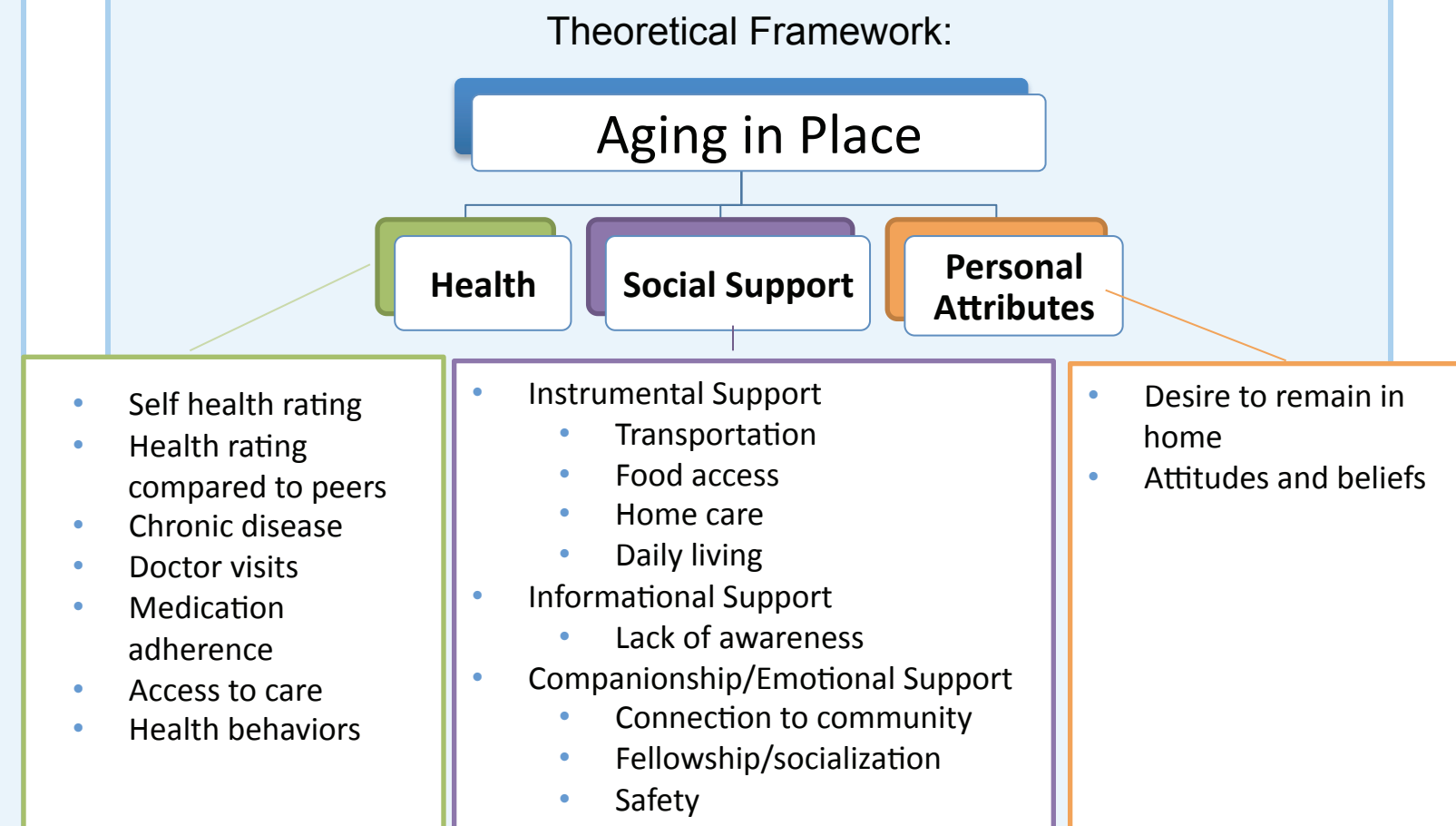
- As more adults continue to live until older ages they will have a greater reliance on the formal aging care system and continue to use a large proportion of healthcare resources
- From 2000 to 2010, the US 65+ population grew 15.1% compared to the total population that grew 9.7%<sup>1</sup>
- CDC estimates that adults who make it to 65 can expect to live for 19 more years, 14 of those in relatively good health<sup>2</sup>
- Adults 65 years and older comprise over 12% of the population of Philadelphia<sup>1</sup>
- In 2002, 19% of Philadelphia's seniors 65+ lived in poverty, compared to 11% of seniors in the state of Pennsylvania<sup>3</sup>
- Affordable Care Act new requirement for 501 (c)(3) hospitals:
  - conduct a community health needs assessment (CHNA) and adopt an implementation strategy at least once every three years
- An awareness of geriatric needs by health and social service planners and the city government will help focus on the areas where resources and services need to be allocated
  - Research Question:** What are the specific needs of the older population in Philadelphia that need to be addressed in order to facilitate successful aging?
  - Study Objectives:**
    - Conduct a small-scale needs assessment of the geriatric population in Philadelphia
    - Lay the groundwork for:
      - Development of more targeted surveys and assessment tools for future investigation
      - Policy and program development
      - Bolstering of aging services
      - Advocacy for the aging population
      - Making Philadelphia a more age-friendly city



## METHODS

- TJU IRB approved qualitative descriptive needs assessment
- 19 semi-structured one-on-one interviews
  - Participants:** 65+ years old and a resident of one of the TJUH community benefit area zip codes
  - Recruitment sources:**
    - Philadelphia Senior Center (14)
    - JFMA clinic at Philadelphia Senior Center (1)
    - St. Elizabeth's wellness clinic (3)
    - Subscribers to Philly's LGBT Elder Initiative newsletter (1)
- Audio-recordings of interviews transcribed, *A priori* themes developed, and interviews coded for content analysis

## RESULTS



### Demographics:

- 8 males, 11 females
- Mean age: 73, range 65-85
- 42% African American, 42% Caucasian
- Marital status:
  - 32% single, 37% divorced, 26% widowed, 5% married/partnered
- Living situation
  - 47% live alone, 16% live alone sometimes, 37% live with >1 other

### Key Themes:

Contrasting Themes About Future Planning	
<b>Planning for the future</b> (2 mentions)	"If I get to a point where I can't take care of myself, I have a choice to go live with my family or to go into a nursing home, or something like that." P17
<b>Not planning for the future</b> (5 mentions)	"Well, the way it's going now, I wouldn't want any changes." P11 "I don't look ahead. I take one day at a time 'cause tomorrow is not a promise to no one. Behold this day of good. Cause we never know what the next hours may be." P18

## RESULTS

Themes About Connection to the Community	
<b>Feeling part of society</b> (1 mention)	"[Older adults] sort of become the shadows...they grey areas... this has always been a world of younger people...I think part of the problem is the seniors feel like they are extra in this society and that their value is not appreciated." P15
<b>Not enough intergenerational mixing</b> (4 mentions)	"A lot of people once they reach my age they mostly either in care situations or in residences and just surrounded by people their age. And I hope I don't ever have to do that...because I just want to stay as closely in touch with the community as I can." P02
<b>Ageism/Stigma and elder disrespect</b> (3 mentions)	"..looking for my job in my 50's... [after a phone interview that] went very well [the] manager called me in, and I could just see the look on her face... I'm not going to get this job. I could just tell as I walked in....It was just age. And that was not the only time." P02
Themes About Support	
<b>Lack of knowledge of options for future</b> (2 mentions)	"Well I get concerned about when I'm older, and I don't have kids, ya know, I don't know if there's any options." P16
<b>Support for daily living from family and friends</b> (9 mentions)	"I have my grandson come over, and he cleans. I just maintain. I do the basic stuff." P19

## CONCLUSION

Key findings from the interviews include:

- A trend of apathy in regards to thinking about aging and future plans
- A desire to remain connected to the community, including to other generations
- Low use and awareness of organizational support compared to family and friend support

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Implement strategies to get older adults to plan for their aging future
- Bolster community involvement including association with younger generations
- Increase awareness of existing aging resources to augment the role of organizational support in the aging process

## REFERENCES

- US Census. (2010). Philadelphia. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/42/42101.html>
- Centers for Disease Control. (2013, July 19). Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: State-Specific Healthy Life Expectancy at Age 65 Years — United States, 2007–2009. Retrieved from [http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6228a1.htm?s\\_cid=mm6228a1\\_w](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6228a1.htm?s_cid=mm6228a1_w)
- Spector, A., & Diamond, J. (2006). Looking ahead: Philadelphia's aging population in 2015. Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, Retrieved from [http://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/pdfs/2015\\_report.pdf](http://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/pdfs/2015_report.pdf)  
Image: <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/477986/?forcedownload=1>