Definitions, purpose and generation

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Definitions

• As with diagnostic criteria definitions of positive ageing need purpose
• Prediction, maintenance and normative amongst reasons
• Challenges – purposes often high level, tensions reflecting societal confusion
Challenges and sources of confusion in purpose

– Societal fashions
– Political influences and policies
– Individualism vs Collectivism
– & Cultural variation
– Market agendas
– Global relevance
What is healthy, active and successful ageing?

• Healthy/successful/contented? What do we mean?
• Ageing – societal changes in expectations
• Raises issues of what could, should, can be provided (baby boomers) and on the basis of what evidence of ‘benefit’, ‘entitlement’
• Life expectancy – observed, cohorts changing
• Healthy life – observed and predicted
• Continuous changing expectations across cohorts
Disconnection between research on successful ageing and end of life

Range of functioning for “successful ageing”

Successful aging trajectory

End-of-life trajectory

Functioning

Time

Death

Whose evidence?

• Evidence base for understanding ageing not integrated and from variety of sources
  – Demographers, actuarial science
  – Gerontology/geratology
  – Geriatric medicine
  – Neuropsychiatry and neurology
  – Neuroscience
  – Epidemiology
  – Behavioural, Social and Psychological sciences
  – Basic science

  – Public health approach aims to integrate and synthesise.................
Case study – successful ageing and systematic reviews

2006 review - 29 definitions of SA in 28 studies. No consensus definition exists.

"successful ageing" + seven SA-related terms (robust, healthy, positive, effective, productive, optimal, ageing well) and both “ag(e)ing” spelling conventions

PubMed, PsycInfo, ISI Web of Knowledge, EmBase and CINAHL databases
Domains captured by operational definitions and lay perspectives of SA
Frequency and dimensionality of conceptualisations captured by each SA domain.
Independence
Personal Resources
Engagement
Life satisfaction
Support system
Environment/Finances
Health status
Affective status
Physical functioning/disability
Presence/probability of Illness
Cognitive functioning/disability
Mental health
Longevity
Quantitative
Population phenotyping: neuropsych measures – MRC CFAS example
Summary

• Dimensions of life along continuous trajectories
• Difficult to capture
• Purpose and clarity important
• Context important