WELFARE ISSUES OF THE ELDERLY: FRAMEWORK FOR POSITIVE AGEING AN IRISH PERSPECTIVE

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Objective of Presentation

- Promote holistic, integrative Services and care for the elderly, especially the most vulnerable—those who are alone, homeless, ill, marginalized and suffering.
- Create awareness and sensitivity, inform, promote advocacy, get results.
POPULATION: 4,757,976 (2016)

In the 2016 census the following describes immigrant population:

Africa: 0.9% Continent
Poland: 122,515
UK: 103,115
Lithuania: 36,552
Romania: 29,186
Latvia: 19,933
Brazil: 13,640
Spain: 12,112
Italy: 11,732
France: 11,661
Germany: 11,531
India: 11,465
USA: 10,519
Slovakia: 9,717
China: 9,575
In making the 2016 census, only those with considerable numbers (above 5000) were listed. This census, therefore did not include Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, Japanese. Listed Africans and Asians by continent, rather than by country.

Ireland is very new in receiving immigrants as it was considered a poor country until she joined the European Union. This really began a small influx of immigrants. This is growing little by little and hopefully we can count ourselves as multi ethnic, multi racial in years to come. Many more African and Philippino medical and nursing personnel coming to Ireland in these last few years.
Welfare Issues of the Elderly

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES (CSO)

➢ The population aged 65+ increased by 19% between 2011 and 2016, coming to 638,000.

➢ Over half a million in this age group lived in their homes in 2011, with 21,000 living in nursing homes. This number, living in nursing homes increased by 2,000 to almost 23,000 by 2016.

➢ This is a gloomy picture which poses many questions to us as a society and to the health care systems currently in operation, for the vulnerable elderly in our country.
In 2016 the total health expenditure by the government was 14.7 Billion Euro. In spite of this apparently large amount of money, there were/are many gaps in community services, especially to the most vulnerable, who instead of being facilitated to remain in their own homes, receiving adequate care from home health services, are being obliged to sell their homes and live in residential nursing homes, where staff are often too few, and the residents can suffer loneliness, isolation and depression. Thankfully there is an ongoing dialogue around this issue with many groups and organizations actively advocating better care at home.
Welfare Issues of the Elderly

- Welfare issues of the elderly are amongst the most important challenges for human kind. To quote Canadian, Dr. Gabor Mate, “It is therefore clear that to build a framework for positive ageing in our society we must ensure positive environments for our children and youth.”

- This same medical doctor also says “it is never too late to have a happy childhood” inferring that to care for the elderly we must be aware of the variety of physical, mental, spiritual and psychological factors which are so often the conditions in which the elderly find themselves.
Framework for Positive Ageing

(A Hungarian-born Canadian physician, Dr. Gabor Maté)

- To build a framework for positive ageing in our society we must ensure positive environments for our children and youth.

- Research in Brain Science and in Trauma tells us very clearly that the way we respond, internally, to early childhood adverse experiences (war, abuse, neglect, lack of a safe, caring, interactive nurturing environment) can lead to a view of the world as an unsafe, threatening place, which in turn can lead to both physical and mental illnesses.
Children can be lonely, stressed and alone
The Elderly can be Lonely, Stressed and Alone
Lives can be Shattered
Dr. Shonkoff, director of the Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University, USA, states that the foundation of a successful society rests on the health and competence of its population, and it is just common sense to conclude that what happens early in life sets the foundation for everything that follows.
For both children and the elderly

“Where we live, learn, work and play have a bigger impact on our Health than going to the doctor.” (not to disparage doctors/nurses)

The Policies in those places where we spend most of our time — our homes, our communities, our schools and places of work make it easy or hard to live healthy lives.
Promotion of Intergenerational Solidarity

Ubuntu (Zulu pronunciation: [ùɓúntù]) is a Nguni Bantu term meaning "humanity". It is often translated as "I am because we are," and also "humanity towards others", but is often used in a more philosophical sense to mean "the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity". 
“We are communicating better but we are still not out of the woods.”
The elderly need the same components
Research Unit Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

https://developingchild.harvard.edu/

The cost to Society of Disparity are enormous.

Children’s Health is our Nation’s Wealth!
AGEING

With seniors accounting for 12 percent of the world’s population – and rapidly increasing to over 22 percent by 2050 –

There are unique health issues:

- Chronic Health Conditions
- Cognitive Health
- Mental Health
- Physical Injury
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases
- Malnutrition

- Sensory Impairments
- Substance Abuse
- Oral Health
- Bladder and Bowel Control
Dementia

1/10 (mostly women) get it.

Because of its preponderance, it is being widely researched in Northern countries (North America and Europe).

At least 400 different types of dementia caused by different brain abnormalities (which occur over time)—Alzheimer’s being the most common.

Vascular Dementia is the second most common type, and is caused by conditions affecting blood circulation in the brain.

Despite the growing challenge that dementia presents, in the past it has been a neglected, under-funded and under-prioritised issue in the Irish health and social care system.

We know that lives can be transformed if dementia is made a national priority and the National Dementia Strategy (NDS) is the first step in this transformation.
Dementia Elevator

- For the reasons mentioned, Dublin City University, initiated an education and empowerment programme to help individuals, communities and health systems engage with and support people with dementia.

- The main motivation is to achieve ageing for people with dementia, by ensuring that there are people with the right skills to make staying at home a more obvious choice, than is currently the case.
Human Rights Legislation

- Ward of Court Act (1871) to protect people with serious mental disorders e.g. schizophrenia, dementia et al.
- Mental Health Act and Mental Capacity Bill
- Domestic Violence Act (1996) Many subsequent amendments
- Criminal Law Amendment Act/Protection of Elderly
  (Elderly Abuse (physical, sexual, mental) (Connection to Childhood)
- European Statements on Human Rights for the protection of the elderly)
- Equality Act (2004 Ireland) against age discrimination.
In December 2014 the Department of Health published Ireland’s first **National Dementia Strategy (NDS)**.

Over the three years it was developed, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI) worked with the Government to ensure that the concerns and interests of people with dementia and their carers were heard and considered in the Strategy.
Priority Action Areas

- Better Awareness and Understanding
- Timely Diagnosis and Intervention
- Integrated services, supports and care for people with dementia and their carers
- Training and Education
- Research and Information Systems
- Leadership
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Outcomes in Lifelong Well-being

Policy & Program Levers for Innovation
- Childcare & Elderly Education
- Primary Healthcare
- Public Health
- Private Sector Actions
- Child Protection & Social Welfare
- Economic & Communication Development

Caregiver & Community Capacities
- Time & Commitment
- Financial, Psychological & Institutional Resources
- Skills & Knowledge

Foundations of Healthy Development
- Stable, Responsible Relationships
- Safe, Supportive Environments
- Appropriate Nutrition

Biology of Health & Development leading to ageing gracefully & healthily
2. Strengthen core life skills.
3. Reduce sources of stress in the lives of children and families.
Invaluable Voluntary Services in the Community

Many individuals, groups, organisations have emerged in our communities with the express aim of promoting a better quality of life for the elderly.

Examples:
- **Senior Help Line/phone services**
- **SAGE**: Promotes Advocacy for the elderly in whatever nursing home or facility the organization sends you.
- **AGE ACTION IRELAND**: Variety of services visiting the elderly in their homes, in hospitals or nursing homes.
St. Vincent de Paul Society: Give financial and material assistance

Senior Citizens Parliament: Strong voice in issues concerning their welfare.

Third Age: Promotes education on many topics relevant for the elderly. Promotes involvement by the elderly in teaching English or other topics to immigrant populations.
What is it like to be born into and live in very unsafe environments for a lifetime?
Developments to Respond to the Growing Situation!

- “Ireland as a nation is growing older and people are living longer and this is something to be celebrated. However, as the population of older people increases, Ireland will have to adapt its current housing policy to facilitate this change in demographics.

- We must begin the conversation about the changes in our society today so the future doesn’t surprise us. With this in mind, the Committee undertook a series of meetings and stakeholder engagement with the aim of publishing a report that would assist in the future planning in this area.”
Dundalk Town in County Louth is known as an age friendly town and the latest innovative “trial” project has researched and designed equipment and methods to assist elderly in their homes.

The Netwell Centre is a collaborative venture formed between Dundalk Institute of Technology, the Dundalk Town Council (DTC) and the Health Services Executive (HSE). It is housed within the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Applied Sciences.
This is an iPad application to support people in self-reporting.
About Age Friendly Universities & Centres of Education

- **Age Friendly Principles**

- **DCU has identified 10 Principles for an Age Friendly University:**

  - To encourage the participation of older adults in all the **core activities** of the university, including educational and research programmes.
  
  - To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue ‘second careers’.
  
  - To recognise the **range of educational needs** of older adults (from those who were early school-leavers through to those who wish to pursue Master’s or PhD qualifications).
  
  - To promote **intergenerational learning** to facilitate the **reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages**.
  
  - To widen access to **online educational opportunities** for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.
  
  - To ensure that the university’s **research agenda** is informed by the needs of an ageing society and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.
  
  - To increase the understanding of students of the **longevity dividend** and the increasing complexity and richness that ageing brings to our society.
  
  - To enhance access for older adults to the university’s range of **health and wellness programmes** and its **arts and cultural activities**.
  
  - To engage actively with the university’s own **retired community**.
  
  - To ensure regular **dialogue** with organisations representing the interests of the ageing population.

- **Dublin City University**.

- **Third Age College, Co Meath**.

- **National University of Galway**.

- Above colleges as well as many other Educational Institutes are very involved in providing many interesting courses at many levels for Senior people and are very supportive in assisting senior people with their studies, research etc.
Here is the good news! Here is the great news.

“We can design in a radically different manner and create something stupendous, transforming what exists.”

Again always remember

- Think Globally
- Act Locally
Indian Physician Dr. Monica Sharma, global training of Leaders in United Nations has this to say:

“Everywhere I engage, inevitably someone asks: the problem is so large, and my project is small, how can I ever make the difference needed?”

Think Globally! Act Locally
“When we draw upon our wisdom and inner capacities, we respond with courage and compassion; we embody universal values of dignity, equity, and compassion. Our courageous heart is called to respond to humanity…” Sharma

We “will soar on wings like eagles” we “will run and not grow weary”, we “will walk and not be faint” Isaiah 40,31.
“I am one person, what can I do?”

Mahatma Ghandhi was one man, an Indian Lawyer, who challenged the whole of the British Empire when, with an unwavering, non-negotiable commitment to NON-VIOLENCE, he asked the British colonials to get out of his country, and leave India to the Indians. He won the battle, gave his life and was assassinated.

Blessed Hanna Chrzanowska, a Polish nurse, recently declared BLESSED by the Pope, the only nurse ever to be recognized in such a way, organized a unique system of parish home care over chronically ill, which covered hundreds of people living in a communist country in conditions extremely degrading human dignity. The care system was based on professional nurses supported by nuns, students, the family and neighbors of the sick.
Fr. Vjeko Curic, OFM Croatian priest who smuggled thousands of Rwandans to safety during the recent genocide in that country, who worked with all tribes, was shot dead in his own car!

Martin Luther King was only one but he challenged the whole racist discriminatory system of the USA. He won the battle and like Jesus, he gave his life, was assassinated.

Wangari Maathai, Kenyan, Nobel Peace Prize Winner for her work for the preservation of our planet, peace for people, protection of the planet and life for all species, “we cannot tire or give up. We owe it to the present and future generations of all species to rise up and walk”
Dr. Monica Sharma, Transformational Leadership Advocate and Trainer

“Compassion is our love-in-action. When our universal heart breaks open, we are called to respond to suffering in others and act to alleviate it.

Without compassion, our endeavors to manifest dignity and equity are likely to become a polarized space, a fight. Transcending polarization through compassion along with universal dignity and equity will generate enduring transformational results, where the actions that diminish and exploit people and our planet have no place.”
‘If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.’

Lilla Watson* and Indigenous Australians

*Indigenous Australian or Murri visual artist, activist and academic working in the field of women’s issues.
CONCLUSION

- How do we engage meaningfully in life?
- How do we become aligned and attuned in heart, head, and **ACTION WITH RESULTS**.
- There is a quote from a spiritual master of India: "Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life—think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to Transformation of self and others."

Top 10 Tips for Better Ageing

1. Exercise
2. Eat a Healthy Diet
3. Don’t smoke
4. Engage socially with others
5. Have a positive attitude
6. Get regular health check-ups
7. Protect your eyes
8. Avoid excessive sun exposure
9. Get sufficient good-quality sleep
10. Get good financial advice
Love needs to keep dancing towards the future with immense hope.
- Amoris Laetitia, Pope Francis 2018
Don't ever let anyone dull your sparkle

GETTING OLDER IS A PIECE OF CAKE!
CARPE DIEM
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