

The pivotal role of Geriatrics and Gerontology in an aging Europe

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Abstract:

With longevity on the rise, more and more people will live longer but not necessarily healthier lives. The gap between life expectancy at birth and disability-free life expectancy at age 60 continues to grow. The health care needs of older people are challenging and complex and health becomes the main drive of the quality of life in older age. Geriatric Medicine (GM) employs a holistic approach when managing older patients and focuses on maintaining functional independence, reversing disability and frailty and ultimately improving quality of life. The presence of multiple co-morbidities, heterogeneous presentation, evolution and treatment response are among the challenges that an individualised comprehensive practice could tackle. With longevity on the rise, the growing number of Europe's older adults with complex health care needs could be negatively affected by the lack of uniformity in geriatric systems of care. The COST Action 21122- PROMoting GeRiAtric Medicine in countries where it is still eMergING (PROGRAMMING) is an ongoing pan-European project with the main objective to raise awareness of the importance of GM formal training and provide a platform for GM education for a variety of healthcare professionals. The first results of this project report that GM is recognised as a distinct medical specialty in 27 European countries, in 15 countries it is not available as a separate speciality while 30 countries offer specialised care for older people on geriatric wards. In 26 countries GM is a standalone academic discipline, and in 14 countries is associated with other academic medical disciplines.