

Review Article

Ageing, Wellness and Health: Is Every Other Person Different

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Abstract: This paper examined ageing, wellness and health as a factor in the difference in the ageing process of the individual. Ageing in itself has a lot to do with wellness and health which is the reason why we age differently. A lot of factors are associated with ageing and they include nutrition, heredity, exercise, lifestyle and psychological factors. It was therefore concluded that successful ageing, wellness and health can be achieved through regular exercises, proper and adequate nutrition, healthy lifestyle, regular medical checkups and examination and adapting well to changes as a result of ageing. It was also emphasized here that the purpose of health education is to help people to achieve health by their own action and efforts and the aim is to encourage people to adapt and sustain health promoting lifestyle and practices. These can be done through health promotion strategies and education.

Keywords: Ageing, wellness, older person, health promotion, health education.

INTRODUCTION

Wellness and health is very crucial to how we experience older age. Health is a major determinant of the socio-economic development of a people. This is based on the fact that all human endeavours require sound minds in sound bodies for full realization of aspiration (Olise, 2007). Lucas and Gilles (2003) stated that the more people value their health the more they will be willing to make the appropriate allocation of resources to promote and safeguard their own health. The World Health Organization defined health as a state of physical, social and mental wellbeing of an individual and not the absence of disease or infirmity. Good health is basic to everything in life. Wellness according to Paul and Walton, (2004) is an expanded idea of health, many think of health as just the absence of physical disease, but liveliness transcend this concept of health, wellness, optimal health and vitality encompassing physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and environmental wellbeing. Therefore each and every one has the option and the responsibility to decide what kind of future we want, one characterised by zestful living or one marked by symptoms and declining energy. The message is that wellness is something everyone can achieve and achieving wellness requires knowledge, self awareness, motivation and efforts. But the benefits last a life time. Optimal health comes from a healthy lifestyle, mode of behaviour that promote and support your health now and as you get older.

Therefore ageing has a lot to do with wellness and health which is the reason why we age differently. Ageing is the deterioration of bone or other body organs and tissues, disease processes, physical trauma, inactivity, psychological stress and other conditions accelerate ageing (Ene, 2009). Despite the difficulty of separating the specific effects of ageing from those of disease, the study of the aged make a distinction between primary ageing and secondary ageing (Busse, 1969). Primary ageing refers to a generically regulated set of biological processes that occur over time and result in gradual deterioration of the organism while secondary ageing consist of decrements in structure and function produced by disease trauma and other environmental events that are not directly related to heredity (Aiken, 1994). A lot of factors are associated with ageing and they include nutrition, heredity, exercise, lifestyle and psychological factors. Ageing is direct science of systems reluctance (Gavrilov and Gavrilova, 2001) in theory of ageing and longevity.

Some older people have the level of functioning of a thirty years old while some require full form assistance for basic everyday tasks. Population ageing according to Mathur (2007) is pervasive, affecting every man, woman and child. The steady increase of older age groups, population ageing is profound, having major consequences and implications

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on all facets of human life and it has an impact on economic growth, savings, investment consumption, labour markets, pensions. Population ageing is much faster in developing countries. Family life education and health promotion will help to make people age gracefully because people should be aware of factors that affect ageing, theories of ageing, adaptation to changes and problem in ageing. As we age we experience both gains and losses, physical and mental changes occurring gradually. Paul and Walton, (2004) opined that successful ageing requires preparation, people needs to establish good health habits in their teens and twenties. During their twenties and thirties they usually develop important relationship and settle into a particular lifestyle. They also stated that many of the characteristics associated with ageing are not due ageing at all, rather, as a result of neglect and abuse of our bodies and minds. These two factors, the mind and body also contribute to our ageing process. They also lay foundation for some of those older age diseases like arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, hearing loss and hypertension.

People must be enlightened on the need to live a healthy life as it affect the ageing processes that will result in sharp differences between older persons because you prevent, delay, lessen and reverse some of the changes associated with ageing. Health promotion and disease prevention programs focus on keeping people healthy defined by World Health Organization (2005) as the process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health. It moves beyond a focus on individual behaviour towards a wide range of social and environmental interventions. Health education is an attempt to change behaviour from negative to positive, that is change behaviour with negative effects on an individual's health status to developing health and healthful behaviours knowing the benefits and objectives of health promotion. Health education will help people develop health behaviour that will make ageing very graceful, pains and disease free.

According to Basavanthappa (2008), health education is a process that informs, motivates and help people to adopt and maintain healthy practices and lifestyles, advocates environmental changes as needed to facilitate this goals and conduct professional training and research to the end. According to this definition the first objective is to inform people, disseminate scientific information about prevention of disease and promotion of health, exposure to knowledge will melt away the barriers of ignorance, prejudice and misconceptions people may have about health and disease. The second is that health education is encouraged when people want to change their health practices as mere information is not sufficient, this is because information is not always sufficient as it involves the provision and presentation of facts, hence the need for motivation. People must be motivated to change behaviours and habits. This study

focused on ageing, wellness, health and how to bridge the differences between older people in the ageing process in other to minimize the effects and the role of health promotion and health education.

Factors that Affects Ageing

Among people aged 60 and above, heart disease, cancer, arthritis and other chronic diseases account for over 87 percent of health problem globally (Population Bureau, 2007). These can be prevented and controlled through education. Ageing is accelerated by high blood pressure, smoking, lifestyle, sedentary or active, alcohol intake and lipid profile, coronary artery diseases increase in old age. Besides Parkinson's disease, Alzheimers disease is three times more at old age (Mathur, 2007). Psychosocial effects are loneliness, loss of spouse, loss of identity, low income, rigid attitudes and so on.

Ene (2009), listed the following as some of the effects of ageing;

Nutrition, taking proper and adequate diet reduces the ageing processes and tends to increase longevity. It is better to maintain moderate weight than overweight or underweight. Many of the chronic degenerative diseases of older persons can be controlled through proper and adequate diets. Eating habits have a substantive impact on health and quality of human life. Presently one out of ten leading causes of death like cancer, coronary heart disease, kidney diseases, stroke and adult onset diabetes are nutrition related (Okafor, 2009).

Hereditary, this is one of the most important factors in ageing because parents who had short life span and extend their own life span by adhering to good health practices.

Exercise, incidence of cardiovascular disease is reduced through regular exercise as it has the tendency to reduce ageing processes. It is also very important because it helps to decrease body fats, reduces high blood pressure and so on. Supporting this, Mathur (2007), stated the following as benefits of physical exercise;

- Increase longevity
- Decrease amount of fat in the blood
- Maintenance of normal blood pressure, reduction in blood pressure in people with hypertension.

While Ene (2004) listed the following as benefits of exercise to aged;

- The body system become more active to meet the needs of the aged.
- The heart beat faster and so pump out greater volume of blood to all parts of the body.
- The lungs takes in greater volume of oxygen and send out carbon dioxide and other impurities through the mouth and nose.

- The joints are more flexible, the bones are strengthened and the muscles are toned up.
- Improved ability to relax and reduce tension voluntarily.
- Performance of both physical and mental tasks with increased efficiency.
- Reduction of minor aches, stiffness and pains.
- Coordination, strength and endurance improved.

Lifestyle, your lifestyle also determines your ageing status later in life. A healthy lifestyle means you have to refrain from unhealthy behaviours and habits like taking excessive alcohol, tobacco, drug use and misuse, drug abuse, improper diet, inadequate sleep, inability to control stress and unhealthy personal hygiene. Paul and Walton (2004) states that exercises as a lifestyle enhance both the psychological and physical health. The benefits of active lifestyles includes the following;

- Lower blood pressure and healthier cholesterol levels.
- Better protection against heart attack and an increased chance of survival should one occur.
- Maintenance of mental agility and flexibility, response time, memory and hand/eye coordination. We must cut down the level of stress in our lives in order to reduce and control the wear and tear of our body. There should be scheduled physical examination to detect treatable diseases and maintain a healthy weight because obesity makes for unhealthy physical appearance and it could result in premature ageing. The purpose of health education and promotion is to help people achieve optimal health by their own action and efforts.

Theories of Ageing

Aiken (1994) opined that theories of ageing fall into four categories and they are; breakdown theories, substance theories, hormonal theories and ageing clock.

Breakdown Theories:

The breakdown theories stated that wear and tear, stress or exhaustion of the body organs and cells are all as a result of the ageing processes. Poor adaptation to stress on the body has adverse effects on the speed of ageing. Therefore the difference in the ageing process is as a result of how your body can adapt to stress and the health care you have given to your body cells.

Substance Theories:

Substance theories emphasis is on the changes in collagen and proliferation of mutant cells. As people become older, waste products of the body metabolism may start to interfere with normal cells functioning. The number of mutant cells also increases with age, raising

the likelihood of cancerous growths (Aiken, 1994). This can be prevented through adequate diet and controlled through scheduled physical examination to detect treatable diseases as stated by Paul and Walton (2004).

Hormonal Theories:

Hormonal theories, Denckla (1974) stated that human ageing is caused by the release of anti-thyroid hormones by the hypothalamus and these blocking hormones disrupt the absorption of thyrosine which is important for cell metabolism and functioning. According to Paul and Walton (2004) the changes that occur with ageing have repercussions that must be grappled with the resolved in order to limit the changes of ageing, therefore we have to prepare ourselves psychologically, socially and financially for these changes that may occur as we grow older in life. The way we prepare for ageing will result in the differences experienced in the ageing processes.

Ageing Clock:

Ageing clock means that there is limit to which the number of cells in the human body can subdivide before dying. We have to maintain our body, when they are healthy the ageing process will be stress free. Fatal diseases such as cardiovascular diseases and other if not prevented or controlled as the case maybe will affect the ageing process.

We have to confront these changes and if they are not done properly and early enough we will be having a level of functioning of a 30 years old while some will be requiring full time assistance for basic everyday task. Health is very crucial to how we experience old age, we must understand this that is why every older person is different. The objective of health education is to make people as a worthwhile asset with a desire to live long and feel well and learn what it takes to protect and improve their own health. The more people value their health, the more they will be willing to make the appropriate allocation of resources to promote and safeguard their own health (Lucas & Gilles, 2003).

Adapting to Physical and Other Changes

Paul and Walton (2004) gave an insight into how we can adapt to physical changes during the ageing process as some of these changes in physical development or functioning are inevitable. But successful ageing involves anticipating and accommodating these changes. For example changes in decreased energy and in health, the older person have to develop priorities for how to use their energy and what best to use it for, they also have to know how to generate energy. Hearing loss is a common physical disability that can affect and have strong effects on the lives of older adults. It affects the ability to interact with others, which may lead to isolation and depression. Vision usually decline with age, it could be as a result of glaucoma or age related macular degeneration that

can be treated medically. Vision can also be affected by conditions that are products of ageing and there are also strategies to deal with reduced vision. Half of people over the age of 65 years have some form of arthritis, this degenerative disease is associated with joint inflammation leading to chronic pains, swelling, and loss of mobility. There are more than 100 types of arthritis, but osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common (Paul & Walton, 2004). Osteoarthritis causes disability which includes not being able to walk in older individuals, and this affects about 74% of women (Paul & Walton, 2004). There are also strategies for reducing the risk of arthritis and those already suffering from it. Through health promotion and education strategies, people will be educated on the benefits of physical exercise. Osteoarthritis could be managed through weight control and exercise which helps to lubricate the joints, strengthen the muscles around them and protecting them from further damages. Ene (2009) is of the opinion that the physical exercise by older people can take the form of the following;

- Trekking to and fro the market, church, visiting distant relatives within the neighbourhood, going to the farm land, through trekking the leg muscles, shoulder and arms are properly exercised.
- Doing home chores such as scrubbing, sweeping, washing, dusting, polishing shoes, grating, breaking of wood and so on because planned exercise is necessary for all round development of the body.

At older age, we have to control our blood pressure, overweight and sedentary habits. Therefore regular check up is very important at this stage in life, they must seek the advice and counsel of physicians since the human system and organs tend to degenerate with age. Regular medical examination for breast cancer, prostate test should be done. The older age should be made to understand the signs of common health problems of the aged. Their homes should be such that it will reduce falls and accident.

Ene (1998) and Ene (2001) state that clean and conducive environment can contribute greatly in the health promotion of the aged. Disorders such as nervous disturbances, high blood pressure and ulcer are caused by lack of understanding in knowing how to adapt. For ageing we must be prepared to meet stress and learn how to make adjustment in a world that is constantly changing and things doesn't always go smoothly.

According to Paul and Walton (2004) Osteoporosis is a condition in which bones become dangerously thin and fragile and the consequences of this include fracture, weight loss, stooped posture, back and hip pains, and breathing problems. They should also learn to cope with these ageing health problems. They should also be able to handle and adapt to physiological and mental changes. We associate older

age with forgetfulness, absentmindedness, and memory loss. Anyhow one of the most important ways to dealing with these changes associated with ageing is to adopt a flexible attitude to whatever life brings your way, will help them greatly in coping with all these changes associated with ageing (Eme, 1998; Ene, 2001).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It can be concluded based on this study that wellness is something everyone can achieve and achieving wellness requires knowledge, self awareness, motivation and efforts. But the benefits and rewards are for a life time. Optimal health comes from a healthy lifestyle, mode of behaviour that promote and support your health now and as you get older. Ageing in itself has a lot to do with wellness and health which is the reason why we age differently. A lot of factors are associated with ageing and they include nutrition, heredity, exercise, lifestyle and psychological factors. Population ageing generally has some major consequences and implications on all facets of human life and it has an impact on economic growth, savings, investment consumption, labour markets and pensions. Family life education and health promotion will help to make people age gracefully because people should be aware of factors that affect ageing, theories of ageing, adaptation to changes and problem associated with ageing.

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