
World News

China: Elderly face solitary future

China is rapidly turning into a different society. Up to four generations living under one roof is slowly becoming obsolete. China's elderly population currently counts 130 million souls, and is expected to increase to 230 million by the year 2020. The rapidly greying population presents the Chinese Government with serious challenges. To prepare for the future, 20,000 Chinese were questioned as to their dwelling wishes in a study sponsored by China's National Committee on Ageing. Half the senior citizens polled said they would like to live in the same area as their children, but not in the same building itself. According to the sociologist Li

Baoliang (Institute of Sociology, Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences) this choice is not necessarily voluntary. Often older persons don't get enough care from their children and psychologically they don't get enough support, and so they leave the ancestral home. However, almost 75% of those surveyed share with Europeans and North-Americans an aversion from the nursing home.

More info: www.globalaging.org/rural_aging/world/chinasface.htm

Europe: AGE, the European Older Peoples' Platform

AGE was set up in January 2001 following a process of discussion on how to improve and strengthen cooperation between older people's organizations at EU level and of a

non-profit nature. Membership of AGE is open to European, national, and regional organizations, and to both organizations of older people and organizations for older people. Organizations of older people will have the majority of votes in AGE's decision-making bodies. AGE is co-financed by its members and by the European Commission. AGE aims to voice and promote the interests of older people in the European Union and to raise awareness of the issues that concern them most. AGE is involved in a range of policy and information activities to put older people's issues on the EU agenda and to support networking among older people's groups. Among our guiding principles is that a change of attitudes is needed to achieve a society for all ages, seeking solidarity between generations in a way that recognizes older people's contributions to society. AGE is committed to combating all forms of age discrimination in all areas of life and aims to monitor and influence the implementation of the various EU initiatives in this area. The monthly newsletter CoverAGE is available as hard copy and as an electronic format, in English and French, upon request also in German, Italian and Spanish. More info: www.age-platform.org

Europe: Conferencing

Technology and Service for the 3rd Age, Verona (Italy), February 19-21, 2003, brought new insights in Domotics and Smart Homes, Technology for Homecare and a Future Vision on Assisted Living for Elderly. Although in Italy Gerontechnology is not yet subject of a university chair, it is utilized at different levels. University interest is growing and the establishment of relevant university courses has been discussed, as well as enlarging the membership of ISG.

GerontExpo – Gerontechnology Symposium, Paris (France), March 25-27, 2003, discussed the need for gerontechnology. Should gerontechnology be a subdiscipline of gerontology and be included in the

French Gerontology and Geriatric Society? A home-care project under the 6th Framework of the EU is also handled within this society. At the meeting no consensus was reached.

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France: Innovation Prize

GerontExpo, an International Exhibition of Products and Services for independent living in care or at home (Paris, France, March 25-27, 2003), organized a competition in technological innovation products for older and for handicapped persons. It was evaluated by the Fédération Hospitalière de France together with the Société française de gérontologie et de gériatrie and the Fondation nationale de gérontologie.

In the category for older persons the 1st Prize went to AphyCare Technologies for its electronic bracelet to be used the day around. The bracelet measures and checks pulse, breathing rhythm, body temperature, and movement of the wrist. In case of falling or illness the bracelet automatically informs a care person or care organisation. More info: www.gerontexpo.com/A01_handicap/A01_04_animations/A01_06_cours_prix.htm

Germany: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Gerontotechnik (GGT)

The GGT (German Association for Gerontechnology) brings industry, scientists and consumers together to improve technology used by older persons. Its activities include all technological artefacts used in daily life or for special care. Focus is on ease of use and safety of enhancing and compensating technologies. GGT's basis philosophy is summarized in the saying: 'Designing for the young is excluding the old; designing for the old is including the young'.

More info: www.gerontotechnik.de

Italy: SIVA Portal

SIVA (Servizio Informazioni Valutazione

Ausili) provides the Italian Internet portal to information and guidance on assistive technologies for independence, quality of life, and participation in society of persons with disabilities. It addresses users, professionals, and researchers. SIVA was established in 1981 as the Assistive Technology Research and Information Centre of the Don Carlo Gnocchi Foundation in Milan. This Foundation is the largest private non-profit Organisation in the field of rehabilitation in Italy. It was founded just after the second world war by don Carlo Gnocchi in order to provide care, rehabilitation, and social integration to children injured by war. Since that time, the Foundation has rapidly grown and now runs 20 medical and social rehabilitation centres throughout Italy, providing medical, social, and vocational rehabilitation, to individuals of all ages with a variety of physical, sensory, and mental disabilities SIVA is also a department of the Clinical Research Institute (I.R.C.C.S.) "S. Maria Nascente" of the Don Carlo Gnocchi Foundation. As such it takes part in research programmes carried out with the support of the Ministry of Health and the European Commission, such as Technologies for the social integration and the Public Healthcare or Technologies to link up Medical Rehabilitation and Social Integration.

More info: <http://intranet.dongnocchi.it/siva/ENG/generale/ilsiva/default.asp>

UK: Age Concern

Age Concern supports all people over 50 in the UK, ensuring that they get the most from life. The organisation provides essential services such in the domains of Day Care, Leisure, Learning, Work, and Health. It campaigns on issues like age discrimination and pensions, and works to influence public opinion and government policy about older people. Strong relationships exist with Age Concern groups in other countries.

More info: www.eurolinkage.org/AgeConcern

UK: Centre for Policy on Aging

The Centre for Policy on Ageing was established in 1947 by the Nuffield Foundation with a remit to focus on the wide-ranging needs of older people. Originally called the National Corporation for the Care of Old People, the name change in 1980 was prompted by recognition of the organisation's transformation from a grant-giving to a policy-oriented agency. Today, the work of CPA is primarily directed towards informing and influencing service providers, the fundamental touchstone of its approach being to discover and advocate what older people themselves want and need. CPA, as an independent centre of research and reference, aims to (i) formulate and encourage social policies which will enable everyone to live life in older age as fully as possible, (ii) promote informed debate about issues affecting older age groups, and (iii) stimulate awareness of the needs of older people and encourage the spread of good practice. Over the years CPA has organised, solely and in partnership with others, many successful conferences bringing together researchers, policy makers, and practitioners to discuss current issues. The AgeInfo web site (www.cpa.org.uk/ageinfo) provides access to searchable bibliographic databases and links to organisations throughout the world whose work is focused on ageing.

More info: www.cpa.org.uk

UK: ForeSight

Foresight aims to provide challenging visions of the future, to ensure effective strategies now. It does this by providing a core of skills in science-based futures projects and unequalled access to leaders in government, business and science. The 5th Foresight project will be on Brain Science and Drugs.

More Info: www.foresight.gov.uk

USA: Administration on Aging (AoA)

For over 35 years, the AoA has provided home and community-based services to

millions of older persons through the programs funded under the Older Americans Act. It includes home-delivered meals programs or nutrition services in congregate settings, or transportation, adult day care, legal assistance, or health promotion programs. If you have visited a nursing home in the USA, you may have talked to one of the AoA Ombudsmen, who provide an ongoing presence in long-term care facilities, monitoring care and conditions and providing a voice for those who are unable to speak for themselves. The Family Caregiver Support Program provides a variety of services to help people who are caring for family members who are chronically ill or who have disabilities.

More info: www.aoa.gov

USA: American Society on Aging (ASA)

Founded in 1954, ASA is an association of diverse individuals bound by a common goal: to support the commitment and enhance the knowledge and skills of those who seek to improve the quality of life of older adults and their families. The membership of ASA is a multidisciplinary array of professionals who are concerned with the physical, emotional, social, economic, and spiritual aspects of aging. They range from practitioners, educators, administrators, policymakers, business people, researchers, students, and more. ASA offers a diverse array of educational programming, publications, and information and training resources, and a network of professionals in the field of aging.

More info: www.asaging.org

USA: The Center for Universal Design

The Center for Universal Design is a US national research, information, and technical assistance center that evaluates, develops, and promotes universal design in housing, public and commercial facilities, and related products. The intent of universal design is to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environment more usable by as

many people as possible at little or no extra cost. Universal design benefits people of all ages and abilities. The Center was established in 1989 under a grant from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) with a mission to improve the quality and availability of housing for people with disabilities, including disabilities that result from aging. Since 1999, the Center operates a Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) on Universal Design and the Built Environment, to improve the accessibility and usability of built environments, and advance the field of universal design.

More info: <http://www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/>

USA: National Institute on Aging (NIA)

The National Institute on Aging (NIA), one of the 25 institutes and centres of the National Institutes of Health, leads a broad scientific effort to understand the nature of aging and to extend the healthy, active years of life. In 1974, US Congress granted authority to form the National Institute on Aging to provide leadership in aging research, training, health information dissemination, and other programs relevant to aging and older people. Subsequent amendments to this legislation designated the NIA as the primary federal agency on Alzheimer's disease research. The NIA's mission is to improve the health and well-being of older Americans through research. NIA sponsors research on aging through extramural and intramural programs. The extramural program funds research and training at universities, hospitals, medical centres, and other public and private organizations nationwide.

More info: www.nia.nih.gov

World: Help Age International (HAI)

HAI is a global network of not-for-profit organisations with a mission to work with and for disadvantaged older people worldwide. HAI is working to ensure that the

voices of these older people participate directly in research and policy formation. The organisation seeks to bring the reality of the lives and experiences of older people to the centre of development practice. To this end they sponsor publications, foster research, lobby when and where needed, and keep a news archive of down-to-earth items. Currently HAI members originate from 49 countries throughout Africa, Latin America, Asia, East and Central Europe and the Caribbean. Information is available in English and Spanish.

More info: www.helpage.org

World: UN Program on Ageing

The mission of the United-Nation's program is to facilitate and contribute to the creation of a society for all ages. The concept of a society for all ages is rooted in the Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development in

Copenhagen in 1995. At the Summit, Member States explored the meaning of 'a society for all'. Viewed as the fundamental aim of social integration, it is a society where '...every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play'. By integrating 'age' into a society for all, the approach becomes multigenerational and holistic, whereby 'generations invest in one another and share in the fruits of that investment, guided by the twin principles of reciprocity and equity'.

Since 1982 focus has been on creating a new 'architecture' for ageing and transmitting it to the world stage and into policy.

The demographic evolution may be viewed in pictures at:

www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/agewpop1.htm

More info: www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/index.html