

Project Title: Intervention for promoting old-age preparation in the community

Abstract

The population in Hong Kong is aging and is having the longest life expectancy in the world (82.3 and 87.7 years for males and females in 2018). Yet, our recent cross-cultural research has found that adults in Hong Kong are less likely to take actions to prepare for their old age compared with those in Germany and the US. People lacking preparation for old age are prone to have poorer wellbeing (including a higher risk for mental illness) while those having preparation are likely to benefit from better physical and emotional health and a sense of security that raises the overall adaptation in later life. Therefore, it is important to promote the awareness and engagement in old-age preparation in the Hong Kong community.

The team is introducing an evidence-based intervention programme to the public targeting people aged 55-70. It covers preparation in old age comprehensively. We focus not only on the health and financial domains, but also two less commonly covered domains, social relationships and leisure activities. The program will start with a public awareness event, followed by four half-day workshops. The workshops include information sessions and individualised goal setting activities. Participants then form groups based on common goals to carry out activities over a 6-month period to prepare for their ageing. The program ends with another public awareness event, which mainly consists of experience sharing from the participants. The aim of the event is to recognise participants achievement over the program and promote old age preparation awareness through real-life experience.

The project highlights and educates the public on the need to prepare for potential changes in important life domains in old age, and makes it easier and more meaningful for them to do so by individualized goal setting and progress tracking. The escalating social and medical expenditure to support an ageing population can be enormous and non-sustainable. Better preparation of later life could enhance the overall wellbeing of the older population in Hong Kong and indirectly reduce the burden on caregivers and public service providers.