



A Life Course Approach to Healthy Ageing (Life Course Approach to Adult Health)

By Diana Kuh, Rachel Cooper, Rebecca Hardy, Marcus Richards, Yoav Ben-Shlomo

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Healthy aging has long been a neglected area of epidemiological research as the traditional focus has been on specific chronic diseases of older life. There is a growing consensus from scientists, research funders and policy makers that ageing itself needs to be studied from an interdisciplinary and life course perspective, to inform strategies for reducing the societal and individual costs of an aging population.

A Life Course Approach to Healthy Ageing is a synthesis of life course perspectives in epidemiology and interdisciplinary perspectives in aging research. It brings together expert investigators of maturing birth cohort and aging studies, cross-cutting methodologists, and authorities in aging research and knowledge transfer from across the world in one wide-ranging volume.

Contributors discuss how aspects of healthy aging are conceptualised, defined and measured; relate to each other; change across life; and are influenced by biological, psychological and social factors operating from early life onwards. They identify research gaps, and suggest how evidence from observational studies can be strengthened through improved study design and longitudinal analysis, thereby increasing the research contribution to practice or policy change.

The book considers how we might delay or slow down the progressive, generalised impairment of function that occurs at the individual, body system and cellular levels, as people grow older. It also considers the determinants of wellbeing in older people, including personal fulfilment, positive emotions and social relationships.

Broad in scope, discussing topics from genetics to psychological and social wellbeing, *A Life Course Approach to Healthy Ageing* is a key resource for epidemiologists, social scientists, clinicians, public health physicians, policy makers and practitioners with a research interest in healthy aging.

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Editorial Review

Review

this is an easy to read, excellent book. Christina Wolfson, International Journal of Epidemiology

About the Author

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Diana Kuh, Professor of Life Course Epidemiology at University College London, is the director of the MRC Unit for Lifelong Health and Ageing, and the MRC National Survey of Health and Development, the oldest of the British birth cohort studies that has followed up over 5000 individuals since their birth in March 1946. Diana is also the principal investigator of the Healthy Ageing across the Life Course (HALCyon) network and co-Director of an NIH programme on the Integrative Analysis of Longitudinal Studies of Ageing (IALSA) that brings together cohort studies to investigate lifetime influences on ageing.

Rachel Cooper is a Programme Leader Track at the MRC Unit for Lifelong Health and Ageing, University College London. Rachel has a BA in Human Sciences from the University of Oxford, an MSc in Epidemiology from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and a PhD in Epidemiology from University College London. Rachel has experience of using data from a range of longitudinal studies to address research questions which have a life course perspective and has worked on the MRC National Survey of Health and Development since 2003. Since 2007 Rachel's primary focus has been on the unit's physical capability and musculoskeletal ageing programme and she has been heavily involved in the study of these measures across cohorts as part of the New Dynamics of Ageing Collaborative Research Programme - Healthy Ageing across the Life Course (HALCyon). Rachel is interested in all aspects of life course epidemiology and in applying this approach to the study of healthy ageing.

Rebecca Hardy is Professor of Epidemiology and Medical Statistics and is a Programme Leader in the MRC Unit for Lifelong Health and Ageing. She leads a research programme investigating the biological and social life course influences on cardiovascular ageing and the development of cardiovascular disease using data from the MRC National Survey of Health and Development and other cohort studies. She also has an interest in the methodology for the analysis of life course data and for cross-cohort comparisons.

Professor Marcus Richards is a Programme Leader at the MRC Unit for Lifelong Health and Ageing, and a Professor of Psychology in Epidemiology at the Faculty of Population Health Sciences, University College London. Marcus read Experimental Psychology at Oxford University, and obtained a PhD at London University in the physiology of human learning. He has held appointments at Columbia University in New York and King's College London Institute of Psychiatry to conduct research into neurodegenerative diseases of ageing, and was one of the first recipients of an Alzheimer's Society Research Fellowship. He joined the MRC National Survey of Health and Development team in 1996, where his work is primarily focused on

developing a life course approach to mental ageing and its integration with physical health and function.

Professor Ben-Shlomo is a clinical epidemiologist and has been at the forefront of a life course approach to epidemiology both a theoretical and empirical level. He is involved with several cohort studies and has interests in ageing, neurodegenerative disorders, endocrine influences on health and equity of access to health care.

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