

11th Working Session

Taking action for older women and men

As they age, women and men share the basic needs and concerns related to the enjoyment of human rights such as shelter, food, access to health services, dignity, independence and freedom from abuse. The evidence shows however, that when judged in terms of likelihood of being poor, vulnerable and lacking in access to affordable health care, older women merit special attention. The initiatives of the Women's Health and Education Center (WHEC) focus on the vulnerabilities and strengths of women at older ages. It is often difficult and sometimes undesirable to formulate recommendations that apply exclusively to women. Hence, our suggestions apply to older men as well.

Growing older in America: There is no question that the ageing of Americans will have profound impact on individuals, families, and U.S. society. In the United States, the US Department of Labor has three pillars of a policy framework for active ageing: Participation, Health and Security. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, labor standards and anti-discrimination policies affecting full-time and part-time workers in both private and public sectors. Discrimination on the basis of age, sex, religion, color, race and ethnicity is prohibited and it is punishable.

Through the administration of the Medicare program, which records the medical services received by essentially all Americans age 65 and older and those less than 65 years who receive Medicare benefits. Its annual wellness checkup with healthcare providers under Medicare Part B is provided free, which includes healthy-brain-assessment and healthy-ageing planning. WHEC's initiatives compliment and promote these *Healthy Ageing* initiatives.

Social Security Administration keeps detailed records on the past employment and earnings of most Americans. Although retirement rates rise steeply at the Social Security eligibility ages of 62 and 65, many older people do remain in the workforce, either full-time or part-time. Health problems can have a big influence on the decision to retire early. The issue of flexibility in working hours is attracting considerable attention as companies and society attempt to find satisfactory accommodations for the ageing labor force. Early retirement offers influence some workers' decisions to leave the workforce before the typical retirement age of 65. Over the past 20 years, defined-contribution plans such as 401(K) plans have become much more widespread.

Volunteer work is another important dimension of work. People ages 60 to 69 at time are most likely to have engaged in volunteer service. Volunteer work is associated with maintaining good overall health.

Elder Abuse and Access to Justice: The U.S. House Select Committee on Ageing estimated that 1.5 million elderly Americans are victims of abuse; overall prevalence rate of abuse is 3.2%; specifically, 2% experience physical abuse, 1.1% experience verbal abuse and 0.4% neglect. WHEC's educational efforts for healthcare providers to identify elder abuse is a two-step process. The first step concerns identifying elders who may be at-risk for elder abuse, and the second step involves verifying instances of abuse. Medical professionals must play a role in patient education and the dissemination of information. All fifty states in the United States have

enacted legislation dealing with elder abuse and have mandatory reporting laws. Details of WHEC's efforts can be accessed:

<http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/vaw/vaw008.php3> .

Legal primer on Massachusetts Family Violence Law – Healthcare professional are mandated by state law to report cases of suspected elderly physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. Frequently asked questions can be accessed:

<http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/vaw/vaw005.php3>

Domestic Violence Programs – Understanding Restraining Order process

The provisions of MGL c209A impose specific responsibilities upon the police regarding a domestic abuse situation. The Abused Person's Notice of Rights outlines the rights of the victims of domestic violence as provided by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 209A. Details can be accessed: <http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/vaw/vaw003.php3>

At the country level, WHEC supports Governments in adopting and enacting legal reforms aligned with international standards. WHEC partners with Governments, UN agencies, civil society organizations and other institutions to advocate for elimination of elder abuse and neglect.

Implementation Challenges

1. Increasing health and education financing, to expand educational opportunities in the field of geriatrics and gerontology for all health professionals who work with older persons and to expand educational programs on health and older persons for professionals in the social service sector. Informal caregivers also need access to information and basic training on the care of older person.
2. Mental health needs of older-persons.
3. Effective organizations of older persons; educational, training and research activities on ageing; and national data collection and analysis. Governments, as well as civil society, can facilitate the mobilization of resources by organizations representing and capacity building.

Join the efforts! We welcome everyone.



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