

adjuvant combination leading to the discovery and development of better and/or newer innovative vaccines specifically tailored to protect against pathogens responsible for infectious diseases resulting in significant morbidity and mortality in older adults. For example, the recent licensure of several vaccines formulated with a new generation of adjuvants to help protect older adults against influenza, hepatitis B and herpes zoster (shingles). This evidence-based approach to the development of adjuvanted vaccines addressing immunosenescence is a primary prevention strategy to develop and maintain the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age.

IMMUNIZATION AS A HEALTHY AGING STRATEGY

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The burden of infectious disease is heavier at the extremes of life: the youngest and the oldest typically have the highest incidence of infectious diseases along with morbidity and mortality. Demographic studies show by the next decade, adults over 65 will outnumber children under 5 years of age. Unfortunately, vaccination coverage in older adults even where permissive recommendations exist is universally lower than in infants or children. Key reasons are a lack of knowledge and understanding of the benefits of vaccination, and inconsistent recommendations by providers. Recently, the concept of ‘healthy aging’ – regular vaccination and lifestyle modification including exercise and diet – has been proposed to go beyond disease prevention and address quality of life issues such as the ability to remain in work, and to live independently. Public and healthcare provider education to ascertain the value of older adult’s immunization are critical for the fulfilment of this agenda.

UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING IMMUNOSENESCENCE

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Aging comes with an increased impact of infectious disease in terms of hospitalization, morbidity and mortality. This increased susceptibility to infection appears to be linked to age-related changes in the immune system and its capacity to respond to infection and vaccination. Importantly, this phenomenon occurs despite existence of pre-existing immune memory. The age-related weakening of the immune response is referred to as “immunosenescence”. Immunosenescence operates at several levels of the immune system and is multifactorial. Recent advances in systems immunology have shed new light on the immunological processes that may drive the age-related changes in immune response to infection and vaccination. However, gaps in our understanding still exist at basic and translational research levels. One approach to counteract this is the development and implementation of innovative vaccines against the pathogens with particular risks for older adults. The use of innovative immune adjuvants holds promise for the development of such vaccines.

SESSION 1140 (SYMPOSIUM)

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF AGING AND SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Chair: Nicky J. Newton, *Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Canada*

Discussant: Jamila Bookwala, *Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania, United States*

Models of aging, such as the successful aging framework outlined by Rowe & Kahn (1987; 2015) should be holistic, necessitating the inclusion of health, psychosocial factors, and social connectedness. Even at the oldest ages, life expectancy and rates of survival are increasing, yet these longer lives are accompanied with disease and disability, especially among women (Crimmins & Beltrán-Sánchez, 2010); thus, maximizing health and well-being during these post-retirement years, which can often span decades, is a high priority. However, models of age-related change, such as those relating to age-related transitions, are predominantly based on men’s experiences; less is known about how women navigate later life (Calasanti, 2010; Kim & Moen, 2002). The presentations in this symposium provide quantitative and qualitative data from women of a broad age range concerning their experiences of aging, with the shared theme of social relationships. Sherman examines the relationship between personality and social support for well-being outcomes in Native American, African American, and European American women (Mage = 57). Conceptualizing aging as the quintessential life transition, Newton outlines the diverse themes of physical, psychological, and social aging from interviews with older women (Mage = 72). Fuller and Toyama find that for older women (Mage = 80), friendships mattered more than family, and counting on neighbors could even be detrimental in terms of life satisfaction and stress. Taken together, these presentations provide a varied picture of what it means for women to ‘age well’, suggesting nuanced ways in which we might conceptualize theories of aging for women.

INTERACTIONS OF OPTIMISM WITH SOCIAL RELATIONS FOR WOMEN'S WELL-BEING

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The impact of personality on the relationship between social relations and well-being has been understudied. We assessed optimism, social support, and social strain in association with self-esteem, depressive symptoms and life satisfaction for a sample of 247 women (Mean age = 57.56, range 45-89 years) from three race groups (42% Native American, 34% African American, 24% European American). PROCESS models revealed significant interactions between optimism and support suggesting that high support buffers the risk of low optimism for all three dependent variables, and two interactions of optimism with social strain, showing that low optimism exacerbated the negative impact of high strain for CES-D and self-esteem scores. The full models accounted for 30-50% of the variance explained in each outcome. We discuss important resources for resilience shown by the women in the sample.

OLDER WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF AGING: THE PHYSICAL, THE PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND THE SOCIAL

Nicky J. Newton¹, *1. Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Canada*

According to the life course perspective (Settersten, 2003), major life transitions are embedded in contexts shaped by personal history and social circumstances “as natural as the changing seasons” (Miller, 2010, p.663). Aging itself is perhaps the epitome of all transitions: a relatively measured movement through a series of situations, conditions, and social roles