

RIASE

REVISTA IBERO-AMERICANA DE SAÚDE E ENVELHECIMENTO
REVISTA IBERO-AMERICANA DE SALUD Y ENVEJECIMIENTO

EDITORIAL

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Population Ageing presents a tremendous challenge for present-day societies. But there is a new understanding as to its multi-faceted nature that has a great impact on social, economic, cultural, scientific, ethical, security, defence and geo-political aspects. Demographic structural changes in populations evidence an increase in the amount of older people in population pyramids and represent a quiet revolution that plays an important role in transforming societies that have experienced social and economic stability and sustained growth over the past decades. This revolution is also a paradox: the result of active well-being policies that have considerably prolonged people's lives and are accompanied by natality rates that barely ensure generational changes.

This is why ageing has a huge impact on the health of the elderly and their whole families and communities. Therefore, scientific evidence is sought to support action required to meet the demand for healthcare services.

Ageing involves a new social and economic process that we need to understand in order to adapt our healthcare systems as best we can but it will also provide us with new opportunities for developing social and economic sectors of great importance in the medium to long-term. Present-day professional capacities must be updated. Promotion, prevention and care must be adapted; food, information technology and telecommunications, insurance, design and manufacturing, ergonomics, motor vehicle, construction and furniture sectors; clothing and footwear; commercial and distribution circuits, including the environment and climate change, all of which affect people's health. These sectors must all be studied, as well as many more.

As we have seen above, studying the ageing process is very important from the point-of-view of health systems and developing Research capacities. This is why the challenge posed by ageing not only represents a need to survive but also a source of opportunities for the future.

The increasing focus of political attention on the ageing problem on an international level sheds fresh hope on new research opportunities in a wide variety of related sectors, which must include nursing and community health.

However, investigators must take advantage of these early stages of population ageing studies and perform extensive research on this particular topic.

First of all, it is necessary to indicate to what extent nursing research could contribute to these new environments and how it could be integrated in the future governance and content of strategies and programmes being developed.

Therefore, systematic reviews (SR) warrant the need to identify gaps in our knowledge of ageing so that findings help to orientate future investigations. We must remember that, in SR, research subjects are not patients but available studies in literature and other sources, from which pre-established data is extracted for efficient integration of all valid information providing an objective and reliable base for rational decision-making. SR can determine the reasons for discrepancies or contradictions found between the results of different investigations.

The importance of SRs in the ageing study lies in the fact that they are a combination of integrational, observational, retrospective and secondary studies that examine the same question and that can provide very valuable answers for people, families and communities.

However, before starting a SR, a pertinent question should be made in an objective manner using explicit methods for selecting and critically assessing publications that respond to the specified needs for research and that will enable the SR to provide us with a summary of existing evidence of ageing or any previously defined related subject. It allows us to identify current research gaps and define future research topics. It provides us with a background history that enables us to incorporate new research activities relating to the subject to be studied.

In addition to the SRs, a systematic, objective, controlled and verifiable search must be carried out that warrants rigorous ageing study methods and attempts to reduce biases contained in subjective reviews.

This is why SRs, if used correctly, are the best possible tool for combining the results of different studies on ageing based on an infinite amount of scientific information that cannot always be handled.