AGE-FRIENDLY CITIES AND AGING IN PLACE

Presented by

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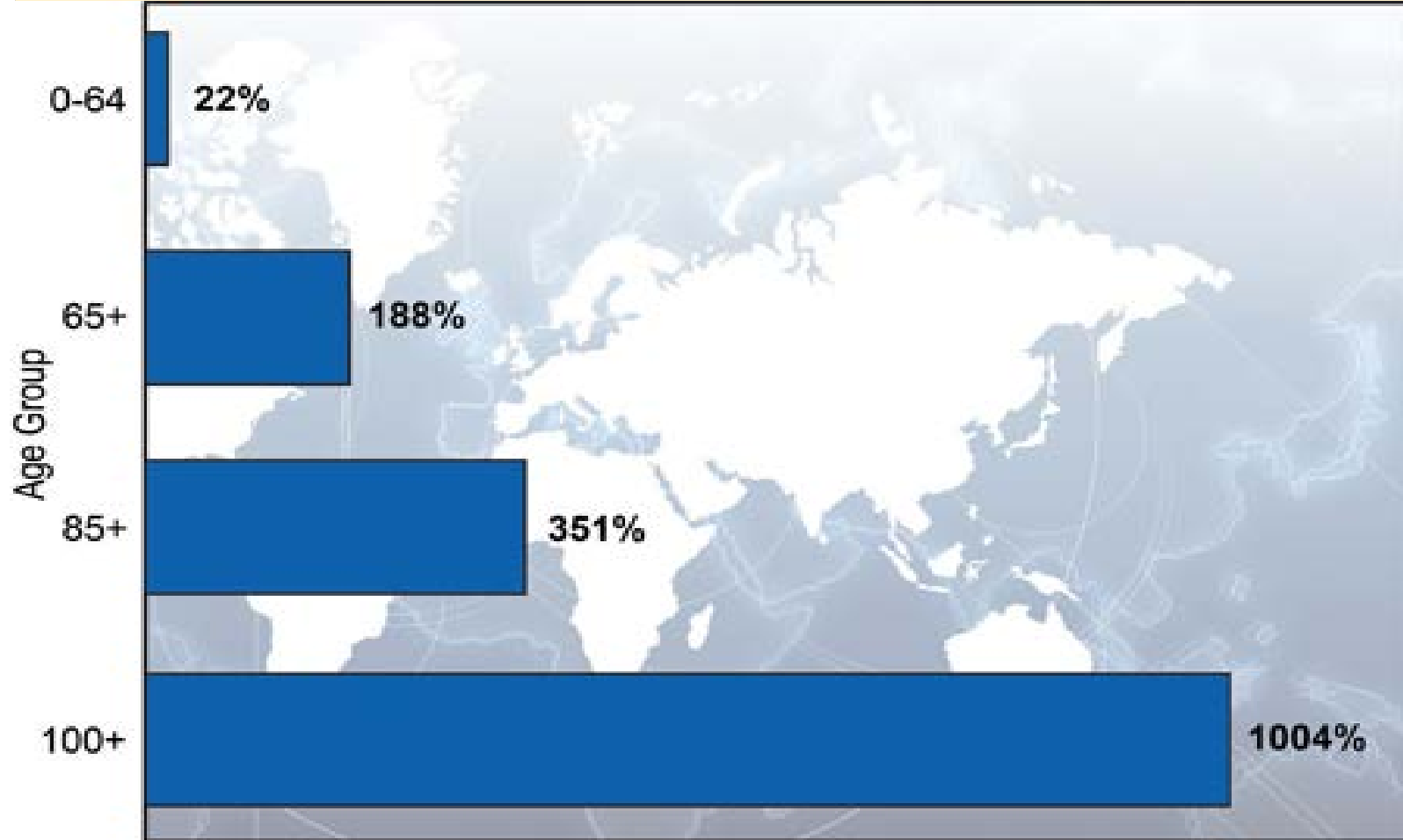
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Why focus on older adult health?

- People are living longer
  - Life expectancy 83-81 years at the top

- Fertility rates are decreasing
  - For the first time in history, older adults outnumber children

- Growing older adult population; so-called "silver tsunami"

Percentage change in global population 2010-2050

- In 2010, 8% of the world's population were ages 65+
- In 2050, 16% will be ages 65+ (1.5 billion people)
- "Oldest old" growing at the fastest rate

Statistics

- In Germany, 17 million people are older adults
  - Make up 21% of the population
  - Country with the 3rd highest proportion of older adults, behind Japan and Italy

- In the US, 43.1 million people are older adults
  - Make up 13% of the population
  - By 2060, 20% will be older adults

Implications for public health

- New disease patterns and epidemiologic transition
  - Increasing burden of chronic diseases

- Disabilities in older age
  - Compression or expansion of morbidity?
  - In US, severe disability falling among older adults but obesity rates are rising

Implications for public health

- Cognitive health concerns
  - Prevalence of dementia and Alzheimer's expected to increase
  - Very low prevalence in younger ages but doubles with every 5 years after age 65
  - More than 50% of women age 90+ have dementia in Germany
  - About 40% in US

Implications for public health

- Long-term care (permanently in need of help to a substantial degree)
  - 2 million older adults in Germany
  - 8 million older adults in US
- In-home or institutional care?
  - Depends on level of care needed
  - Types of institutional care available and financial resources for paid caregivers
  - Cultural and social norms around family caregiving

Implications for public health

- "Other side of the coin" of these implications
  - Instead of challenges to public health or policy, consider the opportunities

- How can we promote "active" or "successful" aging"?
  - More than just being free of disease and disability
  - Optimize opportunities that enhance quality of life and independence
  - Focuses on the perspective and preferences of older adults

Preferences of older adults

- 82% of Germans do not want to grow old in a nursing home
- 87% of Americans want to grow old in their own home
- The concept of "**aging in place**"

Do our physical and cultural environments support active and successful aging? Even for those with concurrent physical and cognitive ailments?

Environmental factors

- Global urbanization (50% live in cities)
  - Urban design can promote or deter independent living and active aging
  - Who's interest is in mind when our cities were built?
  - Design elements that promote aging in place?

Environmental factors

- WHO's guide to age-friendly cities
  - Based on pilot work in 35 cities globally
  - Synthesizes participatory research and evidence from literature
  - Policies, services, settings, and structures support aging by:
    - Recognizing the capacity and resources of older adults
    - Anticipating and responding flexibly to aging needs
    - Respecting decisions and lifestyle choices of older adults
    - Protecting the most vulnerable
    - Promoting inclusion in community life

Outdoor spaces and buildings

- Environment is clean and safe
- Outdoor seating is available
- Pavements are smooth, non-slip, wide enough for wheelchairs and walkers
- Pedestrian crossing allows enough time for older adults to cross the road
- Buildings have ramps, lifts, railings on stairs
- Clean and accessible public toilets

Transportation

- Affordable, reliable public transit
- Travel destinations are set with older adult in mind
  - Stops near hospitals, senior centers, parks
- Priority seating for people with disabilities
- Information is conveyed appropriately

Housing

- Safe and affordable

- Designed or modified for people with limited mobility

- Design facilitates integration into community (is not isolating)

- Affordable services available for older adults to remain at home

Social participation and inclusion

- Community activities/events that appeal to older adults and intergenerational interactions
- Range of volunteer/employment opportunities that are valued
- Public images of older adults are positive
- Older adults are included as partners in community decision-making
that affect them

Community health services

- Adequate range of services
- Home care and social services
- Adequately skilled workforce
- Services are conveniently located
- Emergency and disaster planning take into account the needs of older adults

Example: Outdoor spaces

Portland, Oregon, USA

- Older Adult Bike Program sponsored by the Department of Transportation

- "3-wheeled bikes" and renovate miles of safe paths

- Eventually have fleets of bikes at senior centers for older adults to use for local errands and exercise

Example: Outdoor spaces

Example: Community health services

Seoul, South Korea

- U-Health introduced by the Ministry of Information and Communication

- Uses telehealth monitoring so that older adults don't have to go to the doctor's office

- Monitor vital signs remotely

- Can connect doctors to patients who cannot leave the house or who live far away from services and specialists

Example: Community health services

Example: Social participation and inclusion

Basque Country, Spain

- Age-friendly Business Initiative sponsored by the city councils

- Outreach and education about providing quality services for older adults with mobility, vision, hearing loss, dementia

- "*We are friendly*" window stickers

Sustainability

- Elements of sustainability
  - Culture change
  - Systems and policies that are locally and culturally relevant
  - Participation of older adults to assess needs and preferences
  - Physical design, retrofitting, and urban planning with all ages in mind, not just the average, able-bodied, adult

Concluding thoughts

- Older adults are not inherently vulnerable but the conditions and environment around them create vulnerability
- Most people want to age in place and age-friendly environments is increasingly needed
- Sustainability requires culture change, research, and input from older adults