



INTERNATIONAL INVITED SYMPOSIUM

THE PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION: OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROMOTING AGE- FRIENDLY RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

Key Points from the International Invited Symposium on Age-Friendly Rural and Remote
Communities and Places | Winnipeg MB Canada | October 15–17, 2012

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Background

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is a public health agency that works to improve health and living standards of the countries of the Americas. It acts as the Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization and is part of the United Nations system. At the International Invited Symposium, a panel representing PAHO countries discussed:

- How to address health challenges in rural and remote places
- How to engage older adults in age-friendly in rural and remote places
- How to overcome ageist attitudes
- How to demonstrate the benefits of age-friendly

The following are key points identified by panelists and symposium delegates.

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Health and health care challenges in the PAHO region

Approximately half of the world's population live in rural and remote places and over 90% live in developing countries. However, only 30% of nursing and 25% of physician's services are found in these areas. Almost 40% of Latin America and Caribbean populations do not have access to services to meet their basic health needs; 50% do not have pensions or retirement savings. In Ecuador, about 20% of the older population lives in extreme poverty. Many of them live in rural areas and are Indigenous people. Furthermore, 90% of university programs (medical/health science) in Latin America do not include any knowledge or training in aging or older person's health.

How can we address the health challenges in the PAHO region?

- Examine the needs of the people.
- Promote collaboration.
- Use a social determinants of health model.
- Engage older adults to be part of the solution.
 - Older adults are the reason for age-friendly programs and initiatives and they are also the resource.
 - It is important that people in rural and remote communities and places feel that we are with them and not that they are with us.

How do we engage older adults in the PAHO region?

- Go directly to older adults and mobilize them.
- Find a goal that is important to the people who live there.
- Provide people in rural and remote areas, who often do not have time to rest or relax, with the tools that will facilitate their work.
- Acknowledge the many organizations in which older adults are already involved; Latin America has a tradition of social movements and social rights.



How do we overcome ageist attitudes?

- Teach the younger generation to value the experience of older adults.
- Find ways for the generations to get to know each other better.
- Redirect health priorities to issues of aging; for example, in Latin America the main focus is on mother and child health and not aging.
- Share experience and information on how to scale up good practices.
- Have older politicians acknowledge that they too are older.

Demonstrate the benefits of age-friendly for all

Age-friendly is the lens by which many health programs and services can be developed and implemented. To sustain the age-friendly rural and remote movement, we must show that many may benefit from these programs and services, not only older adults. This can be accomplished by:

- Finding and addressing the common needs of a community, people and places.
- Promoting and sharing age-friendly knowledge, information and best practices among individuals, groups, organizations, communities and regions.



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Snapshot: To make communities in the PAHO region age-friendly we need to:

- Examine the needs of older people
 - Collaborate
 - Engage older people
 - Acknowledge what already exists
 - Address ageism
 - Promote and share age-friendly knowledge, information, and best practices
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