

## Editorial

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Since the 1960s, the age structure of the population of the Latin American and Caribbean countries has experienced major transformations, which have involved the transition from a relatively young population at the beginning of the period to a population exhibiting an accelerated process of ageing. As the region progresses through the demographic transition, with mortality and fertility reaching low, or very low levels, the region will quickly reach an important milestone. This milestone being the quantity of people of old age (60 years or more) being equal to the amount of people under 15 years of age (20%). Cuba is one of the countries in the region that has already equaled this proportion. Countries, such as Colombia, Antigua and Barbuda, Jamaica, Saint Vincent, and the Grenadines, will reach this number by 2037. Grenada, El Salvador, and Nicaragua will do so by 2045; Dominican Republic, Honduras and Suriname will reach it in 2050 and it is estimated that by 2065, all the countries of the region will have reversed the trend and the proportion of older people will be higher than that of children. Globally, between 2015 and 2030, the population aged 60 and over will rise from 900 million to more than 1.4 billion people. This represents an increase of 64% in just 15 years, marking this as the most growing age group (ECLAC, 2018).

This situation constitutes the basis for great challenges that different countries of this region must face especially in areas such as human rights, healthcare, social security, among others. These areas are directly related to the demographic aging process for which there must be a knowledge base that adequately represents the needs of the older adult population that continues to grow. It is also a great opportunity for states to establish more adequate levels of human development during the course of people's lives and thereby guarantee that in the old age, there will be high standards of quality of life that people can enjoy regardless of the socio-economic conditions in which they live.

This special issue of the 'International Journal on Ageing in Developing Countries' addresses the experience and challenges faced by some countries in the Central America and Caribbean

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region. The first three papers are mainly focused on research that details different aspects related to the physical and mental health of older adults in Jamaica. Their richness lies in the contribution they make individually to the identification and treatment of urinary tract health problems, the cognitive impairment and memory problems, as well as the socioeconomic factors related to the presence in the population of chronic diseases and comorbidities. Together, they provide valuable information for the other countries of the region. The fourth article presented in this special edition is a summary regarding the findings of a research on aging and old age carried out by Saldarriaga-Concha Foundation of Colombia and NTD Foundation of the Dominican Republic, which was entitled 'Mission Dominican Ages'. It deals with the population aging process and its implications on six key aspects of the life of older adults in the Dominican Republic. The fifth article refers to the project "Promoting Local Commissions for Political Incidence from Municipalities" which was developed by Costa Rican Gerontological Association (Asociación Gerontológica Costarricense: AGECO). This special issue also includes a supplement paper that centers on the classification of sub-regions worldwide by quantum and tempo of population ageing, focusing on developing countries.

Two book reviews have been included in this special issue, one of them on *Quality of Life and Person-Centered Care for Older People* by Thomas Boggatz, reviewed by María Fernanda Ortega, the other one on *Successful Aging: A Neuroscientist Explores the Power and Potential of Our Lives* by Daniel Levitin, reviewed by María José Méndez Aponte.

Kimberly Ashby-Mitchell and collaborators, in the first paper on *Risk Factors for Chronic Disease Comorbidity: The Health and Social Status of Older Persons in Jamaica*, identify the chronic disease comorbidity patterns that exist among Jamaican seniors through the utilization of data from a population-based study and determine the socio-economic factors that influence the development of comorbid chronic conditions. Dr. Ashby-Mitchell concludes that the majority of study participants had comorbidities and several distinct patterns of disease. Additionally, Mitchell concludes that it has great healthcare expenditure implications that also greatly influences the type of health services needed by old people.

The second article on *Reliability and Factor Structure of the Mini-Mental Status Examination (MMSE) Instrument among Older Adults in Jamaica* by Camelia Thompson and colleagues, examines reliability-related characteristics and factor structure of the MMSE tool in Jamaican older people. They show that the variation of factor scores revealed a pattern that suggests that sensitivity of the instrument pivots around MMSE score 18. Also, they conclude the MMSE is a reliable instrument for use in similar studies and has a three-factor structure. The 3-factor structure parallels recognized dimensions of neurocognitive ability. The established factor structure provides context and understanding, which can aid clinicians and researchers in interpreting data obtained from the use of the MMSE.

Douladel Willie-Tyndale and collaborators in the third paper *Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms and Quality of Life* describe the severity of lower urinary tract symptoms and quantify their effect on quality of life among male urology clinic attendees 50 years and older. They conclude that lower urinary tract symptoms significantly impair men's quality of life. Also, they're

aware that research is needed to identify social and emotional support initiatives which can be incorporated in the management of affected persons.

The fourth paper brings authors from Foundation Saldarriaga-Concha and NTD Foundation to delve into the *Situation of Ageing in the Dominican Republic*, by summarizing into the “Mission Dominican Ages”, the first research effort in the Dominican Republic that comprehensively addresses old age and aging focusing on six key aspects: demography, health, care, education and employment, savings and pensions, and migration. The results show that the Dominican population aged 60 years and over by 2050 will reach 15.2% and life expectancy will be 78 years for men and 82 years for women. The data represents challenges for the Dominican health and pension system, as well as challenges related to education, employment, care and caregivers, among other issues related to the older adult population of the Dominican Republic.

Wendy Cordero from the Costa Rican Gerontological Association (AGECO) shows in the fifth paper *Promoting Local Commissions for Political Incidence from Municipalities* that there are currently 9 of these commissions in Costa Rican localities that were trained on gerontological topics, counseling, and other matters to prepare several reports, such as ‘Reports on older adults: Realities in the localities’. Those reports are shared with local governments in order to present the current situations faced by people of this age group. Among the main outcomes, it has been obtained support from the local governments to improve sidewalks, parks, community halls, and other accessibility spaces. Also, budget had been created and approved in order to attend the needs of this population group.

The supplement article on *Classification of Sub-Regions Worldwide by Quantum and Tempo of Population Ageing: Focus on the Less Developing Countries*, by Marta Mustafina looks into the quantum and tempo of ageing, with the particular aim of examining how sub-regions and selected countries in the world are differentiated in terms of the quantum and tempo of population ageing based on the data for the period 1950–2100. Findings demonstrate that the less developed countries are ageing with a higher speed and intensity which requires timely policy action to mitigate the negative consequences of the phenomenon and utilize the emerging opportunities.

As the first effort to compile articles on aging and gerontology become available in the Central American and Caribbean region, we are humbly proud to present this special issue of the *International Journal on Aging in Developing Countries*. The information, initiatives, and results that are presented here, are the result of the hard work of professionals from different areas of knowledge and a reflection of the situations and needs faced by a population that is increasing more and more rapidly, and that if not attended opportunely, will increase inequalities and deficiencies in their well-being and quality of life.

## **References**

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