

Attitudes to older age and ageing in today's society

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Acceleration of demographic ageing is a 21st century world-wide phenomenon. The results of the process is the fact that older adults account for a larger proportion of the population than ever before. In 2017, there were 962 million people throughout the world aged 60 and more and there is a sound prediction that by 2050, this number will double (1). In the Czech Republic, this trend in demographic ageing is very similar. The Czech population ages since the end of the 80's of the past century. A significant acceleration is noticeable in recent years, namely in the age group 80+ (2). Ageing and older age is often characterized as a period of life connected with many negative stereotypes and older adults in today's consumer society suffer from a stigma of uselessness and worthlessness. The stigmatization affects not only the attitudes of the society towards older adults, but and the individual's attitudes to own age and ageing, including the subjective perception of dignity. Negative stereotyping formerly focused at other people (older adults) begins to influence a negative self-perception and own age later in life. Low et al. (3) defined attitudes to ageing as stable and integrating judgements, which incorporate ideas, feelings and memories of people connected to objects or situations derived from the individual's direct experience or observation. Traditions, religion and sociocultural aspects, typical for a given society, further form these attitudes. All these factors influence the resulting attitude of the society and the individual to age and ageing. The society's respect to experience, authority and wisdom of the older generation lead to tolerance and created positive attitudes towards older adults. Contrarily, negative attitudes are often linked to seeing older adults and ineffective, ill, conservative and sceptical. These negative attitudes towards age and ageing in the consumer society are very common and cause a negative expectations and attitudes amongst older adults simply due to their age. This consequently affects their behaviour, self-esteem and self-worth, contribute to developing depression and anxiety and

deterioration of cognitive skills, as well as subjectively lower assessment of quality of life (4,5). Negative attitude towards older age and ageing affect one's opinion on health and can have impact of physical health, development of geriatric frailty, limited mobility and reduction of independent performance of activities of daily living (6).

In conclusion, it must pointed out that the stereotypes linked with ageing are very common nowadays. It is important to understand the impact these stereotypes have on the psychic and physical condition of older adults, in particular in a society in which the demographic ageing is accelerated. Media and social pressure may cause an individual feels depressed because of ageing. Yet it is a personal decision and choice of every individual if he or she takes the inevitable fact of ageing as a negative process, or whether he or she will look for the positive aspects of this stage of human life. Identifying and solving the psychosocial need of an ageing population, which will facilitate a positive attitude forming, has become an society-wide challenge at the beginning of the third millennium.

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