

Consensus Statement on a Life Course of Healthy Skin

Global Public Health is undergoing a profound change as a consequence of 21st century longevity, where absence of disease is no longer a sufficient metric for health. As we prepare for and begin experiencing 100 year lives, the role of health is also being judged by its impact on active and healthy ageing that affects both “the diseases of ageing” including Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and the increase in cases of cancer, cardiovascular disease (CVD), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), diabetes and dementia as well as the conditions of ageing that lead to a more active ageing through improved functional ability.

As underscored by the World Health Organization (WHO) in its Health and Ageing Strategy: “The greatest costs to society are not the expenditures made to foster this functional ability, but the benefits that might be missed if we fail to make the appropriate adaptations and investments.” One such area, specifically identified by the WHO in its 2015 *World Report on Ageing and Health* leading to and supporting the new WHO Global Strategy, is skin health: “skin suffers progressive decrements with age that result from damage caused by physiological mechanisms, genetic predisposition and external insults”. The report goes on to state “combined, these changes may result in older people having an increased susceptibility to many dermatological [and other health] disorders.”

Accordingly, the Global Coalition on Aging (GCOA), the International Association of Geriatrics and Gerontology (IAGG) and the International League of Dermatological Societies (ILDS) undertake in partnership to work with the WHO and national public health authorities to implement the new WHO Strategy to advance a Life Course of Healthy Skin. We collaboratively endorse consensus agreement on principal areas that will align with the goals of functional ability during ageing:

We acknowledge:

1. Skin health is a key component of realizing a healthy and active ageing as measured by the WHO Global Strategy on Health and Ageing “functional ability” across the life course. It is one of the conditions of ageing for which wellness and prevention strategies will have profound impact on 21st century longevity.
2. Several skin diseases will become more prevalent as the ageing population increases globally. To meet these needs, a life course approach to healthy skin, which starts young and anticipates living longer, must be a core component of 21st-century active and healthy ageing strategies.
3. Changing population dynamics, in which there will soon be more people over the age of 60 years than under the age of 14 years, require a new approach to skin ageing – one that focuses on both prevention and meeting the needs of patient care across all ages.
4. One in every three cancers diagnosed is skin cancer. One out of every two people over the age of 65 suffers from xerosis (intense dryness of the skin), which can lead to pruritus and secondary infection. Dermatological side-effects occur in up to 80 percent of patients receiving cancer treatments. In

addition to the physical disability and medical costs, these conditions have psychological effects and impact quality of life.

5. More active and healthier ageing leading to greater functional ability in “old age” will be enhanced by a transformative approach to skin health adapted to address the needs across our life course, including and critically, frailty:

- A wellness and prevention approach to protect the skin from sun damage can substantially reduce the incidence of skin cancers.
- Effective skin hydration, protection of superficial lipid layer and cutaneous microbiote that will reduce pruritus and xerotic eczema, thereby improving quality of life in older populations.
- Preventive skin care and protection is crucial to maintain skin integrity and function in geriatric and long-term care settings.
- Healthy skin can lead to better mental and emotional health with positive impact on social engagement.
- Proper attention and response to skin health for patients undergoing cancer treatments with dermatological side effects can enable greater commitment to treatment regimens and improve quality of life.
- Proper preventive care and treatment of diabetic foot infections and hyperkeratoses (e.g. corns) can preserve mobility, and increase safety and confidence of the elderly
- 6. An effective life course of healthy skin can drive efficiencies in healthcare costs.

We therefore commit to global leadership in the following areas

1. Collaboration and partnership across the ageing and dermatology fields and across regions that supports the American Skin Association’s 7 Principles of Healthy Skin:

- Minimize direct sunlight and being outdoors from 12:00 to 16:00 hours during the day
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle that includes: not smoking; regular water intake; adequate sleep; and exercise.
- Be able to access dermatological services, where applicable.
- Examine your skin for observable changes and report such changes to your health care professional.
- Hydrate your skin with a moisturizing cream on a regular basis, especially after bathing or showering.
- Maintain good hygiene for skin, hair and nails.
- Immediately attend to wounds to avoid infection and possible scarring.

2. Extending the reach of our messaging on healthy skin to new stakeholder audiences beyond the dermatology and gerontology/geriatric fields.

3. Development of a research agenda – including analysis of existing research and a plan for new research – to enhance understanding of the science of skin ageing and the resulting physical, mental and social implications.

4. Analysis of the economic and fiscal impact of healthy skin on active and healthy ageing.

5. Establishment of a global network of Centers of Excellence on skin health to align and set the goals of the ageing and dermatology communities and coordinate a global plan to meet those goals.

6. Development of core curricula and training programs in academic settings including public health, medical and nursing schools, as well as for caregivers. This includes embedding practices of healthy skin into all elder caregiving, including long-term care and home care

7. Promotion of innovation through new technologies, products and care methods to help prevent skin deterioration and assist in maintaining good skin health across the life course.