

The Impact of Innovation Across Technology, Health, Care and Urban Design for Super- Ageing Societies

Policy Priority Recommendations from a Joint
Global Expert Meeting Convened by GCOA and HGPI

November 2, 2018

On November 2, 2018, the [Health and Global Policy Institute](#) (HGPI) and the [Global Coalition on Aging](#) (GCOA) partnered to host a global expert meeting in Tokyo that brought together international and domestic thought leaders for a conversation on the topics of age-friendly communities, health and financial policy for super ageing societies, and partnerships for an age-friendly world.

The following document summarizes key observations and recommendations from expert participants on how societies can prepare for a super-ageing world. Remarks focused on the themes of **social change**, **lifelong economic participation**, **promoting innovation for super-ageing societies**, and **new possibilities for care**.

How to Use This Document

The intent of this document is to serve as a reference for policymakers with an interest in creating a more age-friendly world as they work to set the agenda at meetings such as the 2019 G20 Osaka Summit and beyond.

Remarks from experts have been organized into **themes**. Under each theme, you will find 2-4 **policy priorities** – these are perspectives that HGPI and GCOA feel should be incorporated into policy moving forward based on the opinions received during our November 2 roundtable. The recommendations listed here do not represent the individual opinions of any one meeting participant, but should instead be viewed as informed suggestions developed by HGPI and GCOA.

HGPI and GCOA hope that policymakers will consider these priorities as they continue the important work of adapting policies to the era of super-ageing societies.

I. Social Change

POLICY PRIORITY 1

Foster Age-Friendly Communities

To effectively improve the lives of all people as we age, including today's over-60 population, countries must consider initiatives that strengthen communities as a whole. Stronger, more vibrant communities in which multiple generations cohabit and communicate with each other make it easier to age in place. Cities like New York City, Shanghai, Manchester and Newcastle in the UK, Washington DC, and Kanagawa are successfully creating "Neighborhood Villages" that encourage community members to play a part in taking care of each other and older adults.

POLICY PRIORITY 2

Change the Discourse on Ageing and Health

Discussions on ageing all too often frame the issue as a problem that is happening to "the elderly." However, ageing affects us all, and policymakers should remember that. Policies enabling healthier and more active ageing do have immediate resonance for the 60+ category (and even and in many cases more so for the 80+ category), but properly constructed policies for ageing societies will apply to all age demographics, as ageing is a process that begins well in advance of one's 60th birthday. On health, much can be learned from Kanagawa Prefecture on the way it discusses health with its residents, using the concept of "Me-Byo." "Me-Byo" is the idea that there is no fine line between good and bad health; the "Me-Byo" concept posits that health is a spectrum. Through "Me-Byo," Kanagawa Prefecture is helping people to be constantly aware of their health, which in turn, encourages them to work more to maintain it, even as they age.

From a broader, societal point of view, the impact of the culture of ageism on financing, healthcare and urban design creates a barrier to this new and needed discourse on ageing and health. The new World Health Organization Ageing and Health Strategy aims to help address this connection, which will be a key component of the Decade of Healthy Ageing: 2021-2030, in which Japan's super-ageing society is already playing a leading role.

II. Lifelong Economic Participation

POLICY PRIORITY 1

Create Opportunities for People to Continue to Contribute to Society Throughout Their Lives

It is vital that all citizens are able to assume valuable roles in society, no matter their age. This is especially important in super-ageing societies given expectations about shrinking labor forces. Regulations must evolve to allow more older people who want to work to continue to do so. Companies employing older workers should be encouraged further.

While governments play a central role in creating positive policy changes, it is also the case that employers across all sectors should take actions that contribute to their competitive success in the silver economy and to broader social support for society. GCOA's [Guiding Principles for Age-Friendly Businesses](#) provide a model for such employer behavior transformations. Employers and governments will need to work together to create a new social contract derived from the needs of ageing societies. This is especially clear for Japan's super-ageing society.

POLICY PRIORITY 2

Promote Lifelong Education

Lifelong education is an essential but often missed path toward helping people continue to make social contributions into their old age. Universities have a valuable role to play in reaching out to those past traditional retirement age and helping them to adjust employment paths if they so choose. With many super-ageing societies facing shortages in their care workforces, there is an opportunity for older adults to be retrained to help care for other older and frail adults. Further, new cottage industries geared toward senior entrepreneurs – particularly across the gig economy – are enabling new learning and continued economic contribution for those who may be otherwise viewed as “retirees.”

POLICY PRIORITY 3

Help People Become Financially Secure as They Age

Governments can help people become and remain financially secure as they age by offering more generous tax breaks on long-term savings and retirement products, frequently offering tools and information to improve financial literacy and increase retirement savings, and elevating the importance of financial wellness across the life course. Profound changes to 20th-century pension and retirement plans – public and private – are also important for helping individuals adapt to a new and different paradigm for working and saving aligned with 21st-century longevity.

III. Promoting Innovation

POLICY PRIORITY 1

Make Greater Use of Data for Healthcare

Healthcare costs increase substantially with age. These increases are most often associated with co-morbidities and especially costly diseases such as Alzheimer's, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and osteoporosis (which can be incredibly costly when combined with all-too-frequent falls). The conditions of ageing that adversely and progressively affect quality of life as we age, including the loss of vision, hearing, bladder control, or skin health, can be equally or more costly due to their duration and negative impact on one's independence. These conditions are also largely preventable, but too often go unaddressed. Data-driven healthcare initiatives can help healthcare systems better identify and tackle these health concerns before they become unbearable costs to the health system. Better data can also help ensure fair and appropriate medical treatment pricing, provide greater access to care, and identify new care practices that remain effective even in spite of increasing limitations on the size of the care workforce.

POLICY PRIORITY 2

Look to Age-Friendly Communities as Test Beds for New Innovation

Many age-friendly communities around the world, such as Greater Manchester, Kanagawa, New York City, Washington DC, and Shanghai are creating test beds for new products, technology, and social interventions in order to improve the lives of older residents. These test beds can be invaluable sources of information on innovative new models for healthier ageing, re-entry into the workforce, or ageing in place.

III. Promoting Innovation

POLICY PRIORITY 3**Create Incentives, and Make It Easier to Bring New Medicines and Innovative Technologies to Market**

As healthcare expenditures grow in super-ageing societies, it is important that measures be undertaken to ensure that medical treatments and procedures are being evaluated and priced in the context of the value they bring, which means the costs they are helping to avoid. Treating new innovative medicines and technologies as investments rather than costs would profoundly transform how governments judge pricing on behalf of society. Current short-sighted approaches to cost containment results in barriers to further innovation, and in the medium to longer term, will cost ageing – and especially super-ageing – societies far more than they will save. Allowing for changes in current policy to accommodate price increases for proven effective medical and technological treatments while discouraging the use of costly and ineffective treatments would have a positive impact on super-ageing by promoting the goal of healthier and more active ageing.

At the same time, the creation of more flexible drug approval processes could help industry to bring innovative treatments to market sooner, which will itself profoundly transform today's most powerful drivers of poorer quality of life and associated growing costs – for example, Alzheimer's, vision loss, heart failure and diabetes. It will also be essential to take a different approach toward prevention, from greater attention to nutrition and other lifestyle behaviors like smoking cessation, to vaccines across the life course.

IV. New Possibilities for Care

POLICY PRIORITY 1

Encourage the Spread of Home-based and Remote Care Practices

Relationship-based home care is an innovative type of care that encourages caregivers of older adults to develop relationships with their care recipients and their families. This kind of care can promote enhanced emotional well-being, better care coordination, better dementia care, greater flexibility for families, improved care safety, and lower healthcare costs. Research shows that in-home care is often better than centralized, hospital-based care.

The role of the private sector in this cottage industry is essential to its value for global ageing, and particularly for super-ageing societies such as Japan. Private, relationship-based home care can help support public health efforts by filling the unmet needs of ageing societies related to the huge and growing gulf between the demand and supply of elder care. Further, the introduction of an efficient and smart balance of high-tech (for example, devices for remote monitoring, facilitating social connections and data collection) and high-touch (with a focus on relationships and person-centered care) can enable prevention, independence and enhanced quality of life in the home.

It is time for health systems to recognize home-based and remote care as standards of 21st-century care.

POLICY PRIORITY 2

Promote Preventative Measures to Increase Healthy Life Expectancies

Preventative measures today could help to alleviate the financial strain on the health systems of super-ageing societies tomorrow. Primary, secondary, and tertiary preventative measures can both improve the quality of life for older people and reduce the cost of growing older. One clear opportunity is to create an adult immunization campaign, aligned to pricing, regulatory approval and population health demands. Preventative measures like vaccinations have far-reaching positive effects across society by stopping the spread of pneumococcal pneumonia, shingles and other diseases for which older people are at heightened risk, and by helping to reduce hospital admissions and healthcare costs. Treating immunization for older adults as a public health imperative – much like the health system currently and rightly treats childhood immunization – is consistent with the needs of ageing societies and is essential in today's super-ageing Japan where not merely longevity – but healthy longevity – must be the new standard. Countries should do more to incentivize healthcare providers to actively pursue such preventative measures.

Acknowledgements

HGPI and GCOA would like to thank the following experts for their participation in our expert meeting, and for their invaluable contributions that made the creation of this report possible.

Masatomi Akana (Corporate Officer and Vice President of Corporate Affairs, Eisai Co., Ltd.)
Sarah Louise Barber (Director, WHO Kobe Centre)
David Gossack (Vice President for Asia, U.S. Chamber of Commerce)
Akihisa Harada (President & Representative Director, Pfizer Japan Inc.)
Yuko Harayama (Former Executive Member of the Council for Science and Technology Policy at the Cabinet Office of Japan)

Nicholas Hill (Minister Counselor for Economic Affairs, U.S. Embassy Tokyo)
Lyo Inuyama (Operating Officer and Head of Medical Affairs, Bayer Yakuhin, Ltd.)
Marco Ivancic (International Operations Lead, Home Instead Senior Care)
Michael W. Hodin (CEO, GCOA)
Patrik Jonsson (President, Eli Lilly Japan; Chairman of Japan Based Executive Committee, PhRMA)
Isao Kamae (Project Professor, Graduate School of Public Policy, The University of Tokyo)
Mitsunobu R Kano (Professor and Vice Executive Director, Okayama University)
Gail Kohn (Coordinator, Age-Friendly DC)
Kiyoshi Kurokawa (Chairman, HGPI)
Yukihiro Matsuyama (Research Director, Canon Institute for Global Studies)
Paul McGarry (Head, Greater Manchester Ageing Hub, Greater Manchester Combined Authority)
Takaoh Miyagawa (Senior Leader, Corporate Management, AEGON Sony Life Insurance Co., Ltd.)
Hiroaki Miyata (Professor of Health Policy and Management, School of Medicine, Keio University)
Toshihiko Morita (Director for Planning, Planning Division, Office of the Governor for Policy Planning, Tokyo Metropolitan Government)

Shinsuke Muto (President, Tetsuyu Institute Medical Corporation)
Kazumi Nishikawa (Director, Healthcare Industries Division, Commerce and Service Industry Policy Group, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI))

Ryoji Noritake (CEO, Board Member, HGPI)
Kazumasa Oguro (Professor, Faculty of Economics, Hosei University)
Kanoko Oishi (CEO, Mediva Inc.)
Pekka Orpana (Ambassador-designate of Finland to Japan)
Melinda M. Pavsek (Science, Innovation and Development Unit Chief, Economic and Scientific Affairs, U.S. Embassy Tokyo)

David P. Ryan (General Manager, Health & Life Sciences Sector, Internet of Things Group, Intel Corporation)

Masami Sakoi (Assistant Minister, Health Policy Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW))

Jiro Seguchi (Head of Asia Pacific Global Corporate & Investment Banking Country Executive for Japan Bank of America Group)

Kenji Shibuya (Professor and Chair, Department of Global Health Policy, Graduate School of Medicine, University of Tokyo)

Kenji Shuto (Vice Governor, Kanagawa Prefectural Government)
Keisuke Suzuki (State Minister of Finance, Government of Japan)
Brian C. Toohey (Senior Vice President for International Advocacy, PhRMA)

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The Health and Global Policy Institute (HGPI) is a Tokyo-based independent and non-profit health policy think tank, established in 2004. Since its establishment, HGPI has been working to help citizens shape health policies by generating policy options, and to bring stakeholders together as a non-partisan think-tank. HGPI's mission is to improve the civic mind and the well-being of individuals, and to foster sustainable, healthy communities by shaping ideas and values, reaching out on global needs, and influencing society. HGPI is committed to activities that bring together relevant players in different fields, in order to provide innovative and practical solutions, and to help interested citizens understand policy options from a global, broad, and long-term perspective. For more information, visit <https://hgpi.org/en/>

Global Coalition on Aging

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