

CHINA HEALTHY AGING CITIES FORUM:
How to proactively prepare for urban aging
by leveraging new public health concepts
in the context of COVID-19

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Roundtable Summary and Key Takeaways



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Summary

The Healthy Aging Cities Forum was a private roundtable jointly organized by the Global Coalition on Aging and Renmin University of China and supported by GSK, which is dedicated to prevention strategies around adult immunization. The Forum highlighted positive policy actions in Beijing and global Age-Friendly Cities to support healthy aging, with adult immunization generally and COVID-19 vaccination success for older adults as key examples.

The interactive discussion provided insights on critical policy steps Beijing and other Chinese cities can take to enable healthier and more active aging, critical for a successful 21st century economy and society. The China Healthy Aging Cities Forum build on linkages with the global UN Decade of Healthy Ageing, GCOA's Silver Economy platform, and the China Development Forum interest in "Revitalizing Aging China."



Key Takeaways

1. Adult vaccination is a critical prevention tool to support healthy aging and healthcare system and economic sustainability in cities with rapidly aging populations, like Beijing and others across China.

More than 1/5th of Beijing's population is age 60 or older. The older population aged 60 and above will reach almost 7 million by the year 2035 and account for over 30% of the total population in Beijing. Keeping this population healthy and active through health prevention initiatives becomes even more important as the older population continues to grow in size and proportion.

2. Adult vaccination is a key preventive measure as older adults are at higher risk of infectious diseases due to age-related decline in immunity and higher risk of comorbidities.

More than three-quarters of Chinese adults age 60 and older have at least one chronic disease. Contracting an infectious disease will often worsen pre-existing chronic diseases and pose a particular threat to older adults.

3. Municipalities like Beijing can lead in the fight against unhealthy aging by mounting efforts in vaccine education and health and vaccine literacy for adults, comparable to those for childhood immunization.

Widespread efforts to support adult vaccination will help protect the healthcare systems and economy as the global population continues to age. Municipalities can advance efforts through updates to care systems and policies such as expanding access through dedicated points of vaccination for adults, prioritization of vaccination by healthcare professionals and individuals, and enhanced data collection around vaccination history and overall health profiles.

4. The WHO Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities and UN Decade for Healthy Ageing can be leveraged not only to advance healthy aging more broadly, but also to advance prevention measures like adult immunization.

WHO age-friendly city framework can promote synergy and coordination of city resources. Cities across the age-friendly city framework can learn from, adopt, and adapt each other's strategies and programs. Health and social care are key domains of action for age-friendly cities and communities. Aging is a global phenomenon that requires both local and global systemic adaptation. There may also be a role in the China-based ICOPE projects being developed currently. WHO has adult immunization as one of the broad areas for ICOPE Pilot work.

5. Healthy aging should be integrated into economic, health, and social policy making and realized through multi-stakeholder partnership.

Healthy aging requires the participation and collaboration of government, society, corporations, families, and individuals. It reflects the 21st century aging platform that spending on health innovation is to be seen as an investment in healthier aging and municipal (as well as national) fiscal sustainability.



Calls to Action

- 1. Improve vaccine confidence, literacy, and awareness among adults** through public health initiatives and education and prioritization of vaccination by health care workers.
- 2. Protect older adults against vaccine preventable diseases through policy levers proven to increase uptake** of existing vaccines, such as incentives to healthcare professionals and vaccine coverage.
- 3. Support policies to improve vaccination infrastructure** to facilitate and expand access to vaccine administration points for older people. This includes vaccination by a broader range of healthcare professionals providing a firm governance framework and appropriate education.
- 4. Join the World Health Organization Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities** to access the healthy aging expertise, leverage best practices, and build linkages among Age-Friendly communities around the world.



Powerful Quotes

“Healthy aging cannot be achieved by a single individual or single unit. It requires multi-stakeholder partnership. Health is not just one person’s health. It’s a family’s health and a society’s health...Healthy aging requires the participation and collaboration of government, society, corporations, families, and individuals.”

Xiaoe Wang, Deputy Director of the Office of Beijing Municipal Working Committee on Aging

“Longevity cannot be achieved without the health of children, the health of adults, and more importantly, the health of older adults.”

Dr. Huaqing Wang, Former Deputy Chief Physician of the Immunization Department, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention

“With the aging trend, we should accelerate the development of vaccines and pay more attention to get more older adults vaccinated to prevent infectious diseases such as flu, shingles, and others, as well as comorbidities. Vaccination is critical for people’s longevity and health.”

Dr. Huaqing Wang, Former Deputy Chief Physician of the Immunization Department, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention

“In many cases, vaccination is cost saving. When we say that we need better vaccination policies and coverage, we are not saying that we need more money for healthcare– we are saying that we need to use our money smarter than we do currently.”

Mark Doherty, Senior Medical Manager, GSK

“When it comes to impact, the burden of vaccine-preventable diseases is growing in every country in the world as populations age. This affects people’s quality of life and has economic consequences which will grow over time.”

Mark Doherty, Senior Medical Manager, GSK

“Age-Friendly cities and communities were better prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic. They had the networks in place and worked very fast in response to the needs of older people in a crisis situation. Given the outstanding work of Beijing, which we saw in the work of Madame Xiaoe Wang, we would very much welcome the city to join this global family of cities and communities that took the same challenge.”

Thiago Hérick de Sá, Technical Officer, Age-Friendly Environments, World Health Organization

“We have close to 1,400 [Age-Friendly] cities around the world, fulfilling the mission of the global network—which is to inspire change by showing what can be done and how it can be done.”

Thiago Hérick de Sá, Technical Officer, Age-Friendly Environments, World Health Organization

“One of the underpinning themes in this event is how we work together at a national, city, and neighborhood level. What are the types of behaviors and alliances we have to build? I think that internationally, building city-to-city relationships through the international network, and through peer support, is critical in understanding how to make progress.”

Paul McGarry, Strategic Lead, Age-Friendly Manchester (UK), and General Manager, Greater Manchester Ageing Hub

“After hearing what has been shared tonight, I think [adult vaccination] will become one of the priorities when we design the next phase of integrative care pilots (ICOPE) in China, which will be in more districts of Beijing and in multiple centers around the country. I think this is an exciting opportunity to use the pilot research to provide more data that can support future policymaking and joint efforts.”

Ninie Wang, Founder and CEO, Pinetree Care Group





GCOA represents a cross-section of global business including technology, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, home care, financial, transportation, and consumer sectors. We engage global institutions, policymakers, and the public to drive debate on, create, and promote innovative policies and actions to transform challenges associated with the aging of the global population into opportunities for social engagement, productivity and fiscal sustainability.

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