

Interdisciplinary Ageing Research: Analysis of the relationship between cognitive decline and health care utilization in European countries.

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Interdisciplinary research in health economics of ageing

This project involves an element of novel collaborative interdisciplinary research in Ageing that will ultimately lead to a new cross Faculty grant application for EU funding. Patient Centred Care has been identified as a central theme in the EU research and we will explore the potential for an EU wide proposal in the topic of cognitive impairment and health care utilization.

This will be achieved by investigating a large European dataset on ageing, SHARE (Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe) and by building networks to incorporate as many European countries as feasible, given the data and country expertise.

Our proposal, to analyse the European SHARE data, forms part of a wider global programme of research that we are currently developing. This programme aims to carry out research in an important policy area, determinants of health, recently identified as one of the emerging themes of research, within the Centre for Health Economics/Institute of Population Health and important to the overarching theme of Ageing and the Lifecourse within the FMHS. These themes feed into the wider University of Manchester research theme of Ageing, brought together under MICRA.

Our interdisciplinary research has two specific research questions;

- 1) how does cognitive decline impact on a person's decision making in their uptake of health care services?;
- 2) does information from peer support impact on this decision?

Importance of Research:

Research on this topic will have a major impact at policy level. The ageing population is an important driving factor in changing the emphasis of health service delivery, for example, moving from acute care in hospitals to community care for long-term health conditions, such as dementia.

While this condition alone is a large strain on resources, it has also been recognised that impaired cognitive status is a hallmark of dementia and recent research shows that cognitive decline may begin much earlier than expected, with onset often occurring at middle age (BMJ, 2012). The impact of cognitive decline is emphasised further in people with co-morbidities, such as hypertension and diabetes. It is not surprising therefore that health care policy now puts cognitive decline and dementia at the forefront of the health agenda.

This proposal will allow us to exploit this varied expertise to foster this interdisciplinary research, currently under resourced at the University of Manchester, as part of the strategy in the Manchester 2020 strategic plan (engaging in big questions through research in MICRA, to promote interdisciplinary and innovative research on all aspects of ageing).

The starting point of our research is to use the SHARE study (that follows people over time from 2004 to 2012), to provide descriptive analysis for our EU application, by identifying the target population and following their trajectory in cognitive ability over time. The support from MICRA will allow us to further formulate our research questions for this interdisciplinary research, in all European countries.

Potential Impact

The final results will be used as a benchmark for future research on cognitive impairment. We expect large citation of our publications from both policy makers and academics. These benchmark findings will provide further insight into the European health and ageing policy debate and feed directly into the redesign of health and social care systems.