

European Year for **Active Ageing**
and **Solidarity between Generations 2012**



International Women's Day —8th March 2012—

The European Institute of Women's Health invites you to celebrate International Women's Day and to promote the health of women throughout the EU. International Women's Day is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and improvements to be made.

Gender Equity in Health—Promoting Active and Healthy Ageing

Despite considerable progress in recent years at both national and international levels, gender inequalities in health remain in many areas across Europe. Strategies for promoting the health of women at the community level have not yet been introduced in any systematic way to the enlarged European Union. Neither has a systematic analysis been undertaken of how the healthcare sector could, or should, respond with greater sensitivity to the varying healthcare needs of women of all ages across all Member States.

The EU has declared 2012 to be the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between generations. The EY2012 will serve as a framework for raising awareness, identifying and disseminating good practice and importantly encouraging policy makers and other stakeholders at all levels to promote active ageing. The EIWH is a member of the EY2012 Coalition and works to highlight women's specific health concerns during the year.

Europe has the highest proportion of older women in the world. There are now about three women for every two men between the ages of 65 and 79, with over twice as many women over the age of 80. "While women outlive men on average by 6 years in Europe, women spent more of their later years burdened by chronic diseases, disability and loss of independence needing long-term care," said Hildrun Sundseth, EIWH board member.

Ageing is the single greatest risk factor for developing cancer, heart disease and many other chronic diseases. As the European population ages and both men and women live longer, cancer rates will steeply increase. After heart disease, cancer is the second major cause of death in older people for both men and women. Recent findings suggest that many women experience heart disease differently and their diagnosis is often delayed;

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improved prevention, diagnosis and treatment strategies are needed to support healthy ageing.

Osteoporosis is a chronic disease that largely and disproportionately impacts older women. Bone loss in women is more accelerated in the first years of menopause; by the time a woman reaches 80, she may have lost about 40% of bone mass. Rarely displaying any symptoms, osteoporosis results in fragile bones that may easily fracture with no warning. A simple fall around the house can result in fracturing a hip, needing hospitalisation. Nine in ten hip fractures occur in 80% of older women. Hip fractures are costly to treat, often causing disability. Within the first year after a hip fracture, an estimated 20-24% of patients aged 65 and older die as a result of complications.

Age and gender both largely impact health issue risk factors, development, diagnosis, and treatment. It thus needs to be included in health policy and research. There is a statistically significant under-representation of women and older people in clinical trials, making it a critical issue to ageing women. Older people are generally excluded from clinical trials with a typical cut off age of 65 years. Between 2010 and 2030, the number of Europeans over age 65 will rise by nearly 40%. In Europe, 2/3 of those over 65 years are female, and most of those over 80 years are female. Women take more medicines than men and have more adverse drug reactions when adjusted for confounders.

Let's work together across Europe

“Only concerted efforts by all stakeholders working together to make older women's health a priority and to garner the political will and the resources to act, can eliminate the current inequalities that many women still must face in Europe”-Peggy Maguire, Director General.

END

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