

‘HEALTHY AGEING WORKSHOP – WORKSHOP SYNOPSIS

Given below is a very brief outline of what was discussed at each of the eight presentations during the ‘Healthy Ageing’ workshop conducted in Canberra on 2 April 2017.

Positive Ageing - Presented by Dr Sasikala Selvadurai, a geriatrician (aged care specialist) who spoke on ‘Positive Brain and Mind in Ageing.’ Dr Sasikala touched on key elements of positive ageing: understanding the importance of ageing; data relating to life expectancy and health; neuroplasticity and dementia. It was interesting to note that ageing positively implies rather than adding years to life (i.e., longevity), it is adding life to years. Sasikala encouraged participating in social or service activities, learning new languages, singing, dancing or courses at the University of the Third Age (U3A) and undertaking moderate to easy exercises. Sasikala recommended stretching exercises prior to undertaking any physical exercises. All these are aimed at exercising not only the brain but also exhibiting positive healthy ageing patterns.

Dental Care in Ageing - Presented by dentists Dr Naren Chellapa and Nithya Chellapa. The presentation was titled ‘Dental Health’ and covered: an overview of teeth and how these change with ageing; common dental issues in the elderly; oral hygiene techniques; ulcers and side effect of some medications.

Vision in Ageing and Lifestyle Modification – Presented by Prathayini Tara Muralitaran, an optometrist and Gajani Ganeshanatham, occupational therapist. Prathayani touched on common eye issues in the elderly and when one should get their eyes tested. Gajani’s presentation touched on older people to make the most of their abilities to perform daily activities and remain independent by suggesting how a person with vision issues can adapt their environment to avoid glare and increase colour contrast and how to adapt their home to meet their needs due to loss of vision.

Gut Issues in Ageing - Presented by Dr Kavita Subramaniam, gastroenterologist. Some of the topics covered included: symptoms; risk factors and diagnosis for Bowel Cancer; Oesophageal Cancer and Stomach Cancers. In addition Dr Kavita touched on Reflux Disease; factors that contribute to the disease; foods that can be associated with reflux; lifestyle changes and long-term complications of the disease.

Common Cancers - Presented by Dr Pranavan Ganeshalingam, Medical Oncologist. Dr Pranavan conducted an informal discussion on common cancers in the elderly such as, colon cancer, prostate cancer, lung cancer, ovarian cancer, cervical cancer and brain tumour. His discussion included how to identify symptoms.

Osteoporosis and Nutrition - Presented by Dr Seevaratnam Sivakumaran, a geriatrician and Dinethri Ramasundara, founder of Nutrisense and an accredited Practising Dietitian. Topics included; what is osteoporosis and dietary requirements including supplements. Dr Sivakumaran suggested that all should take daily vitamin D supplements particularly if living in cold climates.

Advance Care Planning – This workshop was presented by Elizebeth Van Wyk from Calvary Public Hospital. Elizabeth touched on: why Advance Care Planning is important; what constitutes Advance Care Directive; some of the challenges encountered when patients became incapacitated and had not put in place Advance Care Directive; and where to find resources relating to advance care planning

Meditation – ‘It is never too late’ Presented by Dr Nadana Chandran a retired neurosurgeon. Dr Chandran has a deep understanding of his topic and covered: What is meditation? Why meditate? How to meditate. The history of meditation including the universality of meditation. Scientific research on the benefits of meditation and its social and medical benefits and some meditation techniques.