Older adults prefer to remain in their home

Living at home in old age: This is what most older adults want. As a result, there is a high demand for senior apartments and tailor-made services for the care of older adults in need of assistance in their own households. This is one of the main findings of the population survey in Canton Basel-Landschaft, which was conducted as part of the INSPIRE project. The detailed cantonal report is now available online.

As in many other regions of Europe, the proportion of elderly people in the total population is increasing in Switzerland. In Canton Basel-Landschaft alone, the number of people over 80 is expected to double by 2045.

Using results for care planning

Older people often require a combination of services, but these are neither centralized nor coordinated, exposing older people to the risk of fragmented care. Negative consequences of this fragmentation include multiple use of services, inappropriate or contradictory recommendations and medication errors. This might lead to insecurity, stress and strain for older adults and their relatives. In addition, there are higher costs due to unnecessary hospital admissions, emergency department visits and other unnecessary use of services. These adverse outcomes can be prevented by developing and implementing integrated care models.

Due to these challenges, a new care legislation “Altersbetreuungs- und Pflegegesetz” came into force in Canton Basel-Landschaft in 2018. This new care law obliges the municipalities to form care regions and set up Information and Advice centers for older adults. The INSPIRE population survey report, which was commissioned by the Basel-Landschaft Health Department, provides an overview of the current health and social situation of older people in the Canton Basel-Landschaft and at the same time highlights the obstacles which currently stand in the way of a better quality of life in older age.

Current situation of older people

The INSPIRE survey was sent to almost 29'000 senior citizens in spring 2019. 30.7 percent filled out the questionnaire. Slightly more than half of the answers came from women and the average age of respondents was 81.8 years.

One of main results of the survey is that older people prefer to continue living in their own homes. The majority stated that they currently do not need assistance in their daily lives, but anticipate that they will be increasingly dependent on help in the future. Around a quarter of those surveyed show signs of frailty, which can be attributed both to physical limitations such as mobility and memory problems and to social challenges such as loneliness and fear. In the event of future dependency, the majority of respondents prefer to remain in their original home and be supported by family members, friends, neighbors or care organizations.

Prevention, risk groups and new technologies
Only about one-third of those surveyed follow the World Health Organization’s recommendation to spend at least 75 minutes a week doing intensive physical activity. In addition, 11 percent of the men stated that they drink more alcohol daily than recommended as an upper limit by the Federal Commission for Questions on Addiction and Prevention.

A closer analysis of the differences between non-frail people (73.4%) and frail people (26.6%) showed that the latter tended to be less physically active, were more likely to be lonely or depressed and tended to take a higher number of medications.

It is also worth mentioning that older people seem to be open to the use of new technologies such as telemedicine or home robots.

The information gained provides decision-makers as well as family members, caregivers and other caregivers with valuable insights into the needs of older people. In the future, the results of the report will be used to further develop health and social services so that the elderly population can benefit as long as possible from good health and a high quality of life.

The complete cantonal report of the INSPIRE survey in German can be downloaded via the enclosed link.

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Inspire Project