




**Transfer of Ageing Knowledge and Myths**

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**Abstract**

“Ageing” is a socially constructed representation of apparent neural-biological and psycho-social changes in advanced age. The construction is open to the influence of not only science, but also folklores, religions, the fear of death, and the politics of “Who should care for the aged amongst us?” Knowledge of what ageing is and what it should be is highly contestable and often mixed with myths. Although ageing research has been relatively successful in “debunking” some of the older myths, it has the potential of creating inadvertently new myths of its own. The present talk addresses some of the modern myths and the need for a broader and more critical approach to the transfer of ageing knowledge.

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**Outline**

- Introduction
  - WHO model of knowledge transfer/translation
  - Necessity of KT
- Knowledge of ageing and its transfer/translation
  - Ageing research is interdisciplinary and a social and political activity
  - Knowledge and myths
  - Integrated KT
- Concluding remarks
  - Effectiveness of KT
  - Back to basics
  - Implications

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**Knowledge transfer  
(or knowledge translation more broadly)**

*Knowledge Translation is defined as “The synthesis, exchange, and application of knowledge by relevant stakeholders to accelerate the benefits of global and local innovation in strengthening health systems and improving people’s health.”*

World Health Organization  
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### Necessity of KT

*Research evidence, no matter how compelling, will never fully contribute to improved health and a strengthened economy unless new findings are translated into products, practice and policy in a timely and efficient manner.*

*So much research, so many contradictory results.*

Canadian Institutes of Health Research

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### Ageing research

Interdisciplinary: bio/medical sciences, behavioural/social sciences, humanities.

Social: researchers are members of scientific and scholarly communities, these communities set standards of inquiry and evaluate knowledge claims, researchers are trained into the communities, work in and identify with them.

Political: researchers compete for resources and fame, form alliances, and have ideological and vested interests in particular theories that may mirror conflicts in the wider society.

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### Knowledge or myth?

- ageing and death are caused by genetic programmes
- we are on the verge of achieving immortality
- life expectancy will continue to rise in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- all older folks are the same

Olshansky (2011)

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### Knowledge or myth? (cont'd)

- To be old is to be sick
- You can't teach an old dog new tricks
- The horse is out of the barn
- The secret to successful ageing is to choose your parents wisely
- The lights may be on, but the voltage is low
- The elderly don't pull their own weight

Rowe & Kahn (1998)

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謬誤	真相
體弱多病、等死	長者患有慢性疾病較常見，但亦並非必然，只要及早和適當的治療及配合健康的生活模式仍可活得開心。
孤獨、無人理	大部份的長者和家人親友仍保持密切的關係，不少主動參與社交活動，結交朋友，生活圈子闊。
無記性、失去學習能力	在老化的過程中，記憶力衰退的情況因人而異的。常動腦筋和運用輔助記憶工具有助適應生活，並以開放的態度面對老化，實行「活到老、學到老」。

編印人：李玉芝 總編輯：陳炳麟 助理編輯：謝文慧 岑智榮

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### Types of knowledge use

Instrumental: translate research results into protocols and other usable forms for specific decisions.


Conceptual: using research results for general enlightenment or changing ways of thinking but without changing actions.

Symbolic/political: use results as a political tool to legitimize and sustain predetermined practice against opposition.

NB: effective use requires trust and active learning beyond passive receipt of knowledge.

Beyer (1997)

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### Integrated KT

Researchers do not simply disseminate findings at the end of their research, but engage research users in the whole research process from agenda setting to data collection, interrogation of findings and dissemination of research results.

Integrated KT is effective for instrumental and conceptual usage of knowledge, but susceptible to political influence.

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### Effectiveness of KT

Knowledge gap: research results that are already familiar to users would have less impact than those that are unfamiliar or innovative.

Knowledge credibility: research results that do not meet users' expectations of expertise and trustworthiness are less effective than those that do.

Participatory learning: users who have participated in the research process are better able to comprehend the research results and more likely to be "converted."


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### Back to basics

Conduct solid empirical research to reveal principles that contribute to theory-building, rather than piece-meal collection of data or mechanical replication of overseas research.

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### Implications

Widespread public and private concern of ageing in Hong Kong has created strong demands for a KT culture.

KT development can be reinforced by corresponding funding requirements and university rewards.

Other inputs: KT capacity building, integrative interdisciplinary collaboration, and stronger partnership with the media.

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### Thank you

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