



Centre for Research on  
Ageing, Health and Wellbeing



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **New research insights: Ageing well is different for men and women**

New research will be presented next week showing that factors contributing to wellbeing in older people differ for men and women.

Professor Hal Kendig, from the Centre for Research on Ageing Health and Wellbeing (CRAHW), and the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research (CEPAR), said: “For years the question of what it is to age well has been addressed by academics and experts. However, we still have much to learn about what factors influence wellbeing as we age and whether they are different for men and women.”

Co-Directors of the study Professor Kendig, based at the Australian National University, and Professor Colette Browning, from Monash University, aim to use the findings to gain a more in-depth understanding of factors that contribute to ageing well. Their findings will be presented at the Impact of Ageing on Mental Health and Wellbeing Conference in Barcelona next week.

“Identifying factors that contribute to ageing well for men and women is the first step to designing health promotion and interventions that improve everyone’s ability to age well,” Professor Kendig said.

In the Melbourne Longitudinal Studies on Healthy Ageing program (MELSHA), on which the new research is based, ageing well was defined as living independently in the community and being in good physical and psychological health. The study identifies very different risk factors for men and women not ageing well.

Professor Browning said: “We found that perceived strain, lower levels of social activity, perceived inadequacy of social activity, low perceived social support and being a current smoker were key risk factors in men for not ageing well.

“The risk factors for women were different: incontinence, low Body Mass Index and lower physical activity,” Professor Browning said.

“Designing health promotion and interventions that cater to the needs of men and women separately is important to ensure that older people can age well according to their individual needs,” Professor Kendig said.

“When this study started, the average age of the participants was 73. Twelve years later, half the participants had passed away and only a third had entered residential care prior to their death. Of the surviving participants, the majority were considered to be still ageing well, which is quite remarkable.”

Professor Kendig says the results from MELSHA show the value of investing in self-care interventions and health promotion for older people.

“It’s hard to overstate the importance and value of health interventions at all stages of the life course. Our research findings here articulate specific interventions for healthy ageing. But the overall message from all our research is clear: It’s never too late to age well.”

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