

# MEDIA RELEASE

25 October 2012

## Thinking yourself into an early grave?

New research to be presented today demonstrates a link between an older person's attitude to ageing and their mortality.

“A negative self-perception of ageing increases your risk of dying earlier by 12% and risk of cardiovascular event by 34%,” said Dr Kerry Sargent-Cox from the ARC Centre for Excellence in Population Ageing Research (CEPAR).

Dr Sargent-Cox said the research was based on data collected as part of the Australian Longitudinal Study on Ageing (ALSA) and found a direct correlation between negative perceptions of ageing and dying.

“This research tests the ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ notion and finds that negative self-perception impacts your ability to age well. Approaching old age with negative expectations directly affects how long you live.

“There has been a lot of research into the power of positive thinking, but when it comes to ageing, a positive approach has clear links to a longer life.”

Part of the first wave of findings arising from the ALSA, a longitudinal study of Australia's aged population based at Flinders University, is now in its twentieth year and is set to produce a raft of findings that will yield new insights into how we age.

Part of the research included participants agreeing or disagreeing with a range of ‘self-perception’ test statements:

- Things keep getting worse as I get older
- I have as much pep as I had last year
- As I get older, things are better than I thought they would be
- I am as happy now as I was when I was younger
- As I get older, I am less useful

“One of the reasons self-perception is so important is because it affects how people behave. Expectations impact a person's decision to go for a walk, seek medical advice for their persistent pain problem, or explore options to manage their arthritis,” Dr Sargent-Cox said.

“It's these decisions that can ultimately affect your quality of life as an older person and hasten your death.

“Our next step with this research will be to examine ways to improve our expectations and self-perceptions of ageing – in order to achieve positive ageing.”

The Self-Perceptions of Ageing and Health research will be presented as part of today's Symposium on the Psychology of Healthy Ageing hosted by the Centre for Ageing Health and Wellbeing based at the Australian National University. See flyer below for more detail.

For more information contact **Melanie Brake** on 0479 072 233

Centre for Excellence in Population Ageing Research &  
APS Ageing Interest Group (ACT) Proudly Present:

# The Psychology of Healthy Ageing Symposium

## Program of Speakers

**Professor Mary Luszcz** - [Ageing Well—A South Australian Perspective.](#)

Director of Flinders Centre for Ageing Study, the home of the Australian Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ALSA), Mary will present findings from a range of psychosocial indicators that point to a cohort ageing well. Mary will discuss the advantages that accrue from having a strong sense of control, self-esteem, morale and cognitive resources. She will argue that the importance of examining psychosocial variables stems from their modifiability and capacity to enhance ageing well

**Annaliese Blair** - [What can a psychologist do in a Residential Aged Care Facility?](#)

Clinical Psychologist Annaliese and her team from the Aged Care Evaluation Unit will present case studies to illustrate the type of work psychologists can do in Residential Age Care Facilities. They will also discuss their plans to evaluate the clinical outcomes of their services. This is a good news story about forging a service for older adults who currently have limited access to psychology services.

**Dr Richard Burns**— [Mental health and wellbeing across the lifespan: Is there hope for later life?](#) Richard is a research fellow at the ANU's Centre for Research on Ageing, Health and Wellbeing (CRAHW). Using data from DYNOPTA & HILDA, two large Australian longitudinal studies, Richard will present recent findings that paint a complex picture of wellbeing and mental health as Australians age. Whilst clinical depression is no more prevalent in older adults, there is evidence of increasing depressive symptomology and suicidality. Conversely, drawing on a burgeoning positive psychology literature which promotes the value of positive components of health and wellbeing, there is evidence that adults are flourishing as they age.

**Dr Kerry Sargent-Cox**— [Longitudinal change in self-perceptions of ageing and mortality.](#) Kerry is also a research fellow at CRAHW and CEPAR. She will report on her work regarding older adults' perceptions of their own ageing, and how these perceptions influence major health outcomes, including mortality. The findings of her work demonstrate the importance of maintaining positive perceptions of ageing and also provide us with a greater understanding of the psychological mechanisms surrounding healthy aging and adaptation to age-related changes in late life

## Event Details

### DATE & TIME

Thursday 25 October, 2012

2 to 5pm

### VENUE

Innovations Theatre  
Innovations Building  
Eggleston Road ANU

### DRINKS & NIBBLES

Will be served after the symposium  
between 4 and 5pm

### REGISTRATION

To register please email [Kerry.Sargent-Cox@anu.edu.au](mailto:Kerry.Sargent-Cox@anu.edu.au) by Monday  
22 October, 2012