

What's Really Better Than Cure?

For some situations, prevention is better than cure – it's how we intend to bring the pandemic under control with a vaccine.

With ageing, there is no 'cure'. We can cure some of the individual ailments that arise, but it's increasingly clear that to get the best out of the rest of our life, the best strategy is prevention. We progress through three basic stages as we age – Able, Less Able and Dependent. The SHAPE Analyser indicates each of these stages plus the estimated lifespan. Possible preventive action to improve overall wellbeing is identified.

Aged Care

Government in Australia has increasingly outsourced responsibility for aged care to 'for profit' providers. This is an unsuccessful strategy. Better funding and oversight of performance is required but more basic changes may be necessary.

People admitted to aged care are unable to manage essential processes of daily life and need full support. Home care is increasingly sought, reflecting dissatisfaction with institutional care and the demographic shift to an older population. Home care is also under increasing pressure.

This has been a problem for years, and the pandemic has exposed it totally. We need major change. As a community we must also invest more in educating ourselves about increasing longevity and fund this by getting the better community value from a growing, capable and experienced older population.

Many people remain well and with the potential to remain in paid work much longer than the traditional 'retirement' age of 65 while they are still Able. If paid work is not

for them, 'in kind' work like volunteering and grandparenting provides economic and health benefits. Community benefits – social and financial - will increase as numbers grow.

What can we take out of this?

We can empower more people from midlife onwards to understand why longevity is increasing and what each of us can do to live healthier and productive lives and commit to achieving our own longevity bonus.

Governments should also provide more support for this through providing or supporting longevity education, reductions in healthcare premiums for sustained wellness, support for employers and incentives for a more holistic approach to personal longevity planning from health and financial advisers.

Prevention in action – dementia

Dementia research highlights a growing number of factors in midlife which can influence the later onset of dementia. They include peripheral hearing loss, obesity, hypertension and excess alcohol. From age 65, add smoking, depression, inactivity, social isolation, diabetes and air pollution. All are amenable to prevention.

Dementia per capita may be declining, but larger numbers of people reaching older ages increases the pressure on aged care resources. Fostering prevention could be even more productive than finding a 'cure'.

Your Longevity Plan

Start or revisit your own Longevity Plan to better prepare for the future.

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SHAPE Analyser now