Welcome to
International Innovation

ADVANCES IN MEDICAL care mean that people are living longer than ever before. The dramatic increase in average life expectancy during the 20th Century ranks as one of society’s greatest achievements. In 1900, most babies did not live past the age of 50, but now in Japan, life expectancy at birth exceeds 83 years and is above 81 in several other countries. In addition to this trend, accelerating economic development in underdeveloped countries is reducing birth rates. This results in changes to the population structure, with fewer tax-paying individuals supporting a larger retired and economically dependent demographic. Increasing numbers of elderly individuals represent an opportunity in terms of the informal charity and care roles that they often perform, and the growth of the ‘silver economy’. However, steps need to be taken in order to mitigate demand on health and social care services by ensuring that people stay healthy and independent for as long as possible into their old age.

From work to unravel the mechanisms of ageing at the molecular level, to more applied studies focused on particular ageing-associated conditions such as osteoporosis, Alzheimer’s and cardiovascular disease, achieving healthy ageing unites the scientists in this edition of International Innovation. Many of these researchers are realising the benefits of forming strong multidisciplinary and international partnerships to tackle such complex and global challenges. While a cure or prevention for dementia remains elusive, research to find ways of allowing people to live independently in their homes for longer, discussed herein, is making admirable headway.

Complementing these projects is the French Minister of State for the Family, Elderly People and Adult Care, who offers a unique insight into how the French Government is changing policy. The aim is to ensure the ageing population strengthens society rather than presenting a burden. Also, Executive Director the United Nations Populations fund Dr Barbatunde Osotimehin discusses the impact of the ageing population in developing countries. Additionally, we attended the Pint of Science Festival in Bristol, UK, last month to hear from leading academics about the work they are doing to treat ‘maladies of the mind’, and learn how public engagement in this area can be enhanced through combining science and art.

We are working hard to build a dynamic community, bringing together a diverse range of researchers, funders, policy makers and commercial partners to showcase the very best from across the research spectrum. As ever, do not hesitate to contact us with any feedback, registration enquiries or proposals for our next edition.

Enjoy the issue! Over and out

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