

AARP, GSA focus on effects of negative attitudes on aging

THE GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

The ways in which negative attitudes about aging can affect people's health and quality of life are the focus of 12 peer-reviewed research papers in a new AARP-sponsored supplement issue of *The Gerontologist* -- the respected research and analysis journal published by The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) since 1961.

"Attitudes and stereotypes about aging haven't changed or have gotten worse. And many ideas about aging and solutions available to us as we age, as portrayed in the media or even in conversations among families and friends, are negative and out of date," said AARP Director of Thought Leadership-Health Erwin Tan, MD.

While the papers examine a diverse range of aging-related subjects and research considerations, a common theme is the prevalence of negative associations about aging and their impact, ranging from memory performance to use of health care. The research explores cultural, geographic, community, and family influences that may play a role in shaping an individual's attitude on aging.

"Wherever these negative perceptions come from, the damage can be profound -- for individuals, communities, and larger populations," said AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins, whose book "Disrupt Aging" examines how aging is represented in society. "We need to change the conversation about age and aging in this country. This is not about being 'polite,' it's a necessity. "

In addition to elevating a collection of timely and insightful research, the August supplement to the *The Gerontologist* has a broader goal, according to Jenkins.

"We seek to enlist the aid of gerontologists in helping to change the conversation about what it means to grow older," Jenkins said. "Additionally, we want to remind gerontologists of the critical role they play, not just in academia, but in people's real lives. We are all aging, every day so there is no more mainstream topic than aging."

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The Gerontologist is a peer-reviewed publication of The Gerontological Society of America (GSA), the nation's oldest and largest interdisciplinary organization devoted to research, education, and practice in the field of aging. The principal mission of the Society -- and its 5,500+ members -- is to advance the study of aging and disseminate information among scientists, decision makers, and the general public. GSA's structure also includes a policy institute, the National Academy on an Aging Society, and an educational branch, the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million that helps people turn their goals and dreams into "Real Possibilities" by changing the way America defines aging. With staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and promote the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare security, financial security and personal fulfillment. AARP also advocates for individuals in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the world's largest circulation magazine, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. To learn more, visit <http://www.aarp.org> or follow @aarp and our CEO @JoAnn_Jenkins on Twitter.

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