



Nutrition and Healthy Aging in the Community: Workshop Summary

Sheila Moats, Julia Hoglund, Food and Nutrition Board, Institute of Medicine

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The U.S. population of older adults is predicted to grow rapidly as "baby boomers" (those born between 1946 and 1964) begin to reach 65 years of age. Simultaneously, advancements in medical care and improved awareness of healthy lifestyles have led to longer life expectancies. The Census Bureau projects that the population of Americans 65 years of age and older will rise from approximately 40 million in 2010 to 55 million in 2020, a 36 percent increase. Furthermore, older adults are choosing to live independently in the community setting rather than residing in an institutional environment. Furthermore, the types of services needed by this population are shifting due to changes in their health issues. Older adults have historically been viewed as underweight and frail; however, over the past decade there has been an increase in the number of obese older persons. Obesity in older adults is not only associated with medical comorbidities such as diabetes; it is also a major risk factor for functional decline and homebound status. The baby boomers have a greater prevalence of obesity than any of their historic counterparts, and projections forecast an aging population with even greater chronic disease burden and disability.

In light of the increasing numbers of older adults choosing to live independently rather than in nursing homes, and the important role nutrition can play in healthy aging, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) convened a public workshop to illuminate issues related to community-based delivery of nutrition services for older adults and to identify nutrition interventions and model programs.

Nutrition and Healthy Aging in the Community summarizes the presentations and discussions prepared from the workshop transcript and slides. This report examines nutrition-related issues of concern experienced by older adults in the community including nutrition screening, food insecurity, sarcopenic obesity, dietary patterns for older adults, and economic issues. This report explores transitional care as individuals move from acute, subacute, or chronic care settings to the community, and provides models of transitional care in the community. This report also provides examples of successful intervention models in the community setting, and covers the discussion of research gaps in knowledge about nutrition interventions and services for older adults in the community.

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