

Dieter Ferring Memorial Lecture

CAN WE ALL AGE SUCCESSFULLY? BEHAVIORAL, CARE-RELATED, AND CULTURAL REFLECTIONS

Wednesday, 19th June 2019

10.00 – 11.30

University of Luxembourg
Belval Campus, MSH, Black Box

SPEAKER



Prof. Hans-Werner Wahl
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Hans-Werner Wahl is Seniorprofessor and *Director of the Network Aging Research* at Heidelberg University. His research activities include the role of subjective aging as well as the physical-technological environments for aging well, adaptational processes related to chronic functional loss, and conceptual issues in aging research. He is the author or editor of more than 25 books and more than 390 scholarly journal articles and chapters. He is the founding editor of the *European Journal of Ageing* (together with Dorly Deeg) and a member of the editorial board of *Psychology and Aging* and *The Gerontologist*. Prof. Wahl is also a fellow of the *Gerontological Society of America (GSA)*. He has received the 2008 *Social Gerontology Award* (together with Manfred Diehl), the 2009 M. Powell Lawton Award of the GSA, and the 2019 IAGG-ER *Advanced Scholar Award: Socio-Behavioral Sciences*.

ABSTRACT

According to Rowe and Kahn's prominent model, the building blocks of successful aging are low burden of morbidity, good functional health, and high participation in society. Although such criteria reflect a positive vision of aging, a very large share of those being in advanced old age would end-up in the opposite of successful aging, hence "unsuccessful aging." Driven by the spirit and inspiration of Dieter Ferring, I will argue that such a perspective is not a promising outlook for aging societies as well as aging science. A major issue is that recent epidemiological data rather consistently converge in the insight that the constantly raising overall life expectancy normatively comes with longer rather healthy, but for many people also with a longer rather unhealthy and functionally impaired life phase. Thus, we are facing the conceptual, empirical, and ethical question, whether the two antithetic constructs of frailty in advanced old age and successful aging can be reconciled in a heuristically fruitful way. Obviously, there is no simple answer and a new task for present and future dealing with aging appears at the horizon. I will finally describe the scope and dimensions of this task, not its solution.

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