
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Implementing a community-based pro-Active Monitoring Program to boost active, healthy, and meaningful ageing

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Long Live the Elderly! (LLE) is a Community-based Pro-Active Monitoring Program that aims to support community dwelling older adults by strengthening their formal and informal network so they can live a healthy, active and meaningful old age in their own environment. LLE was launched in Antwerp in October 2021.

Belgium shows the highest percentage in Europe of people aged over 80 living in LTCF's. Although most older Belgians indicate they prefer to live in their own house as long as possible, they face multiple barriers to home care. Often the lack of someone able to interact with the care system increases social isolation, in which case negative events associated with old age can lead to profound and even tragic changes in their lives.

The LLE methodology consists in actively contacting the target group by phone and home visit. By contacting ALL elderly over 80 in the target area, the most vulnerable and isolated are also reached. Based on the assessment of their bio-psycho-social frailty a phone monitoring frequency is established. In cooperation with existing care and welfare actors, Individualized Care Plans are implemented where required. All Program activities are fully supported by a dedicated software that provides daily tasks to each operator and makes all the operator's input available for controls and fine-tuning Individualized Care Plans.

To combat loneliness and social isolation, LLE is strongly committed to community building involving neighbours, volunteers and all existing facilities in the target area. To create caring neighbourhoods the most important partners are the older adults themselves. They are not only the beneficiaries of the Program but first of all help to build it in their own environment by creating informal networks that support their more vulnerable peers. Regardless of individual vulnerability, participating in LLE restores dignity, meaning and sense of belonging to an often marginalised and underestimated population group.

In Antwerp, after a preparatory period that focused on reaching an agreement with the City authorities, promulgating the Program, training the operators and finding partners, the operational phase started in March 2022 targeting about 5000 over-80s. By September 30th a team of 6 part-time community workers and 2 part-time local coordinators had contacted 1679 elderly willing to participate in the Program. It was the result of 5700 phone calls and almost 2000 home visits. We've established contacts with more than 70 local care and welfare professionals and services that have welcomed the Program and are willing to cooperate.

The LLE methodology has been used in Italy for 15 years and has proven to be effective. Timely detection of care needs, improved referral to professional care and stronger network support result in a decrease of unnecessary hospital admissions and of unwanted rest home admissions. Through networking with professional services, LLE also addresses the challenge of the separation between social care and health care. In the long term, LLE aims not only to improve the quality of life of elderly people and communities, but also to advise policies for necessary changes in elderly care.