

The Longevity Summit discusses Asia's productive economy

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The Economist Events examined how to make longevity a source of healthy innovation in Asia.



Singapore – More than 200 Asian business leaders, government officials and health-care professionals gathered in Singapore to discuss how best to engage Asia's over-60 population in the productive economy and how stakeholders can foster healthier, longer-living societies. The one-day event addressed the challenge of longevity in Asia, the science of ageing, technologies and diet that transform ageing, business models for longevity, generational diversity at work and a case study on Japan.

Kanwaljit Soin, founding president of Women's Initiative for Ageing Successfully set the scene by highlighting: "We have to change this linear version of life that exists currently completely."

To do that, society needs to adapt to older people working for longer on their terms. Wilf Blackburn, chief executive officer of Prudential Singapore stated "it is a myth that older people in Singapore don't want to re-skill and we need to demystify it. Adopting practices in the working environment that are conducive to older people and to allow people to have flexible working hours is so important."

Yet tackling the longevity challenge requires a concerted effort involving all stakeholders. Penny Wan, vice-president and general manager of the JAPAC region of Amgen, commented: "The topic of ageing is far too great for any sector to address on its own. Through focused and purposeful collaborations, we'll be able to move from a health system of break and fix, to one of predict and prevent. Prevention measures lead to better health outcomes, lower costs and better quality of life for patients and their families."

Regarding the methods that other countries can learn from Japan, Naoki Takazaki, senior managing director at Renaissance said that " Everyone has access to the medical services in Japan. Investment in health care pays."

The consensus was that policy makers, financiers, tech companies and scientists need to come together in collaboration if the region is to cope with, but also benefit from, greater longevity.