

Showcasing Ageing and Disability Research Lessons for policy and practice

4th December 2008
Croke Park, Dublin

Why Ageing Research Matters

Peter Lansley

Professor of Construction Management

University of Reading, UK

Director, SPARC



“.....but it's what happens outside of the hospital, clinic and surgery which is so important to quality of life - the home, the street, public buildings, transport..., consumer products. Why can't engineers and designers take a greater interest?”

Conversation with an eminent clinician in 1996

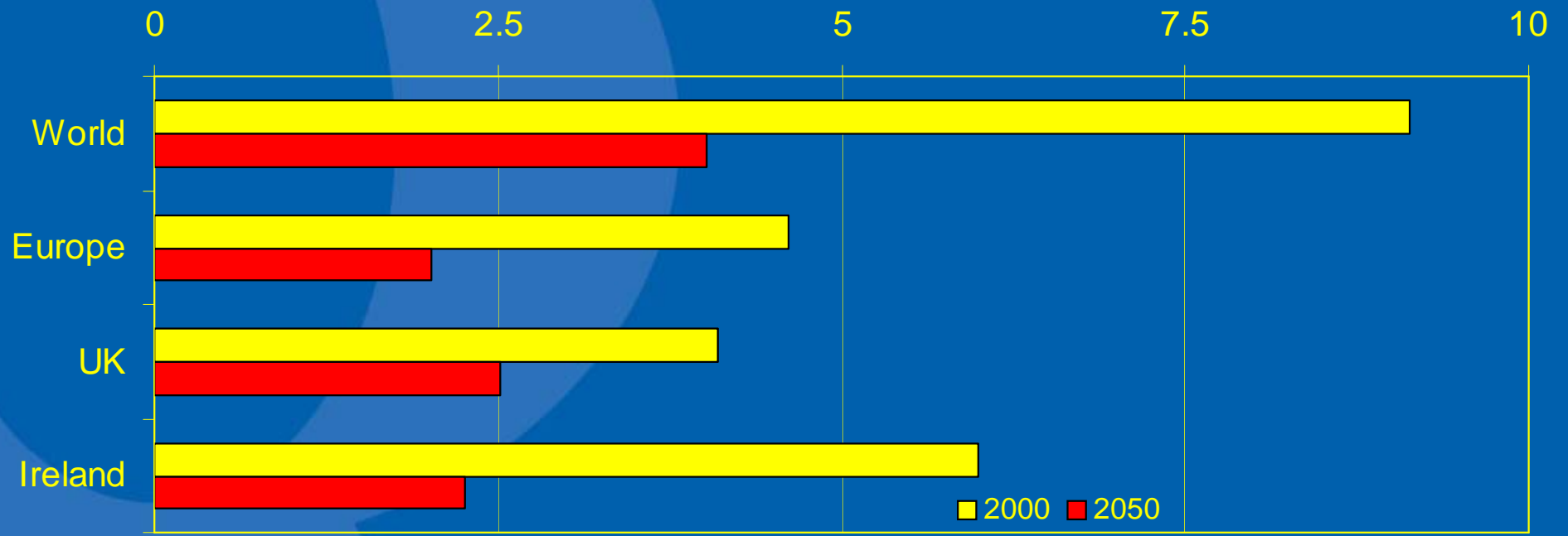
Taking Older People Seriously?



- Very little investment in research and development concerned with older people
- Over-medicalised, over-socialised, over-intellectualised, disorganised
- ‘Top-down’ policy not working, policy documents often useless
- What about offering some solutions?
- Try ‘bottom-up’ - scientists working directly with older people?

Dependency Ratios 2000 and 2020

ages 15 to 65/ 65 + , UN Data



The Realities

- With age comes frailty, illness and disease
- Health care resources will be spread amongst more older people
- Many people want to be independent
- Without some new ideas on how to maintain independence there will be serious problems for society and government as well as for individual older people

Making a Difference to the Lives of Older People

- Since 1997 – major basic research initiatives in the area of ageing
 - Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPSRC)
 - Biotechnology and Biological (BBSRC)
 - Economic and Social (ESRC)
- Design and Engineering Research
 - assisting the professions - design, health, social services.....
 - supporting those who commission buildings, transport systems, products...
 - aiding policy development – housing, transport, care....
 - improving regulations, standards and expectations.....

Touchstones for Success

- **Bottom-up not top-down**
 - ageing is a new area for research
 - the innovators are at the leading edge of science
 - policy driven approaches fail to spot the opportunities for matching science and the needs of an ageing society
- **Ageing research thrives**
 - when those with knowledge of leading edge of science become engaged with ageing issues
 - when older people, practitioners from all walks of life and researchers get together
 - on grassroots “bottom up” enthusiasm of researchers and their supporters to understand ageing and to make a difference to the quality of life of older people.

A SPARC is Born – 2005

- Getting more new faces into ageing research:
 - Encouraging early career academics to do research
 - Engaging non-academics of all types in research workshops and events
 - Lobbying policy makers

SPARC - a Community Led Initiative

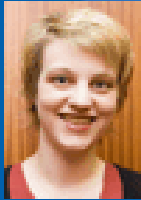
- Early 2005 – late 2008
- EPSRC & BBSRC – modest £
 - Design and engineering research
 - Biological research
 - All areas in between -
 - bio-mechanics/ergonomics
 - muscle/bone
 - cognitive/sensory
 - Assistive Technology, etc
 - Some social science and medical research as well



From Furniture Design to Stem Cells

- Projects
 - Furniture design, Smart homes, Adaptations to the home
 - Better recovery from hip fracture
 - Design of the workplace for older people
 - Better packaging
 - Safer, more friendly streets
 - Computers that are easier to use
 - Assisting local government with transport planning
 - Keeping your car and driving safely
 - Regaining speech after stroke
 - Understanding automated telephone messages
 - Ageing eyes, Stepping safely, Following moving objects
 - Activity, Exercise, Nutrition in later life
 - Oxidative stress, Ageing cells, Stem cells, Lots of biology!

The 34 Award Holders



Workshops

Regular workshops in collaboration with others

- ◆ Throughout the UK, some international
- ◆ Hosted by the community
 - ◆ universities, firms, professional bodies, charities
- ◆ Focused on
 - ◆ older people's needs, issues & problems
 - ◆ contribution of biology, design & engineering

A platform for all-comers

- ◆ Work of leading researchers on ageing
- ◆ Research of newcomers
- ◆ Perspectives of policy makers, practitioners and intermediaries
- ◆ Experiences of end users – older people

Workshops for All

- In one week in March 2007
 - *Ageing Research and Occupational Therapy: building partnerships, creating opportunities*
 - Jointly with the British Association of Occupational Therapists
 - *Anglo-Japanese Werner's Syndrome Consortium*
 - Tokyo
 - *Designs for a Caring Society*
 - British Polio Fellowship, Caversham Methodist Church Hall

Today – the last SPARC Workshop!
Number 46!

But watch this space

More to come under a different name
(KT-EQUAL)

Advocacy

- Making the case that:
 - older people are important
 - ageing research can and is making a difference
- Lobbying
- Some successes
 - Some MPs do listen!
 - Two questions in Parliament:
 - Ageing Research
 - Older Workers
 - Royal patronage –
 - The Princess Royal involved with a SPARC workshop
 - Ministers do listen - especially in Ireland!
 - Strong involvement with grass roots health policy makers especially in relation to dementia

From Proposal to Delivery



Strategic Promotion
of Ageing Research
Capacity

Improving
Computer
Interaction for
Older Users:
investigating
dynamic on-screen
targets

Faustina Hwang &
Nitin Williams

*Meeting the challenges of
an ageing society*

Funded by



June 2007



Strategic Promotion
of Ageing Research
Capacity

Workplace
Design for the
Older Worker

Peter Buckle, Valerie Woods,
Ozhan Ozguc & David Stubbs

*Meeting the challenges of
an ageing society*

Funded by



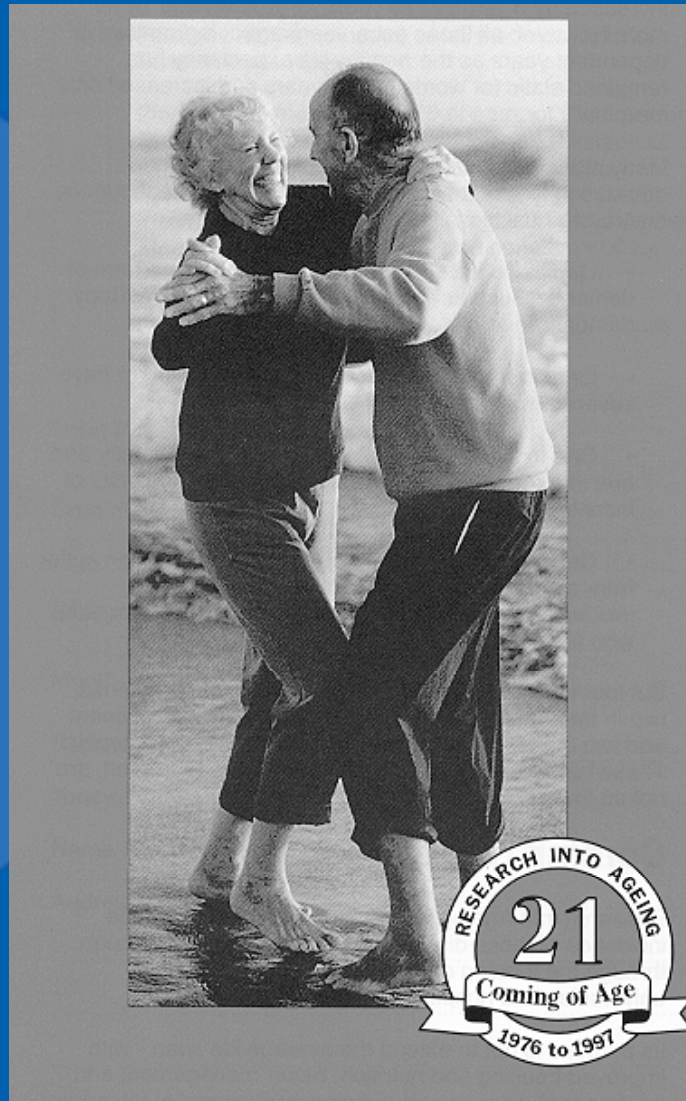
January 2008



Ageing Research Really does Matter!

To older people, society and a
small dedicated band of
researchers who want to make a
difference

The Ultimate Aim:



making life as enjoyable for everyone
as it is for this young couple