

The Robert N. Butler

Columbia Aging Center



Living is aging. Aging means living.

For the first time in history people in countries around the world are enjoying a life expectancy beyond age 80. With these extra years come both challenges and opportunities to ensure that longer lives are filled with purpose and good health – a benefit for all generations and society at large.

The Robert N. Butler Columbia Aging Center is at the forefront of developing knowledge on healthy aging at the individual and societal level. Through innovative multidisciplinary research, support of rigorous academic training, corporate partnerships, policy work, and community outreach, the Center is committed to building a society better suited for longer lifespans.

History

The International Longevity Center was founded in 1990 by Dr. Robert N. Butler, a pioneer in the field of aging research who also founded the National Institute on Aging. In 2013, the Robert N. Butler Columbia Aging Center was founded, combining the International Longevity Center with the Columbia Aging Lab. It is a university-wide center based at the Mailman School of Public Health. Dr. Ursula M. Staudinger, a distinguished international scholar and academic leader in the field of lifespan and aging research, was appointed as its first Director.

Overview

Conducting traditional and interdisciplinary research, the Center aims to investigate and understand the aging process in a new light. Research conducted at the Aging Lab examines the modifiability of human aging to learn under which conditions it is possible to optimize cognitive functioning, physical performance, and more. The International Longevity Center (ILC) U.S.A. incorporates work on knowledge-transfer, advocacy, and outreach into the Center. It is part of the 14-member, multinational Global Alliance, which includes ILCs in Tokyo, Beijing, Delhi, and Paris, translating science into policy and practice.

Faculty and researchers

The Center's work is conducted by investigators from a wide range of disciplines, including in house and affiliated researchers in physiology, neuroscience, lifespan psychology, lifecourse sociology, demography, and economics. Their work considers the social implications of healthy aging, examines factors that cause certain older individuals to excel in levels of function, and studies how performance can hold up under physical and mental stress. The Center also supports doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows interested in the study of aging.

Select projects and research

* **Productive Aging**

Why do some people age more successfully than others? What combination of factors from human biology, education, and individual choices promotes resiliency and receptivity to growth at all stages in life? Center researchers aim to identify characteristics such as work environments and physical fitness that shape differences in capacity known as "plasticity."

* **Wisdom**

The pursuit of wisdom has a long tradition in human history. Following the work of the Berlin Wisdom Project, Center scholars are interested in measuring both personal wisdom and general wisdom across the lifespan to better understand how older adults retain wisdom, the complexities of self-reflection, and the advantages that come to those who maintain healthy curiosity and acknowledge gaps and deficits in their own expertise.

* **Attitude, Identity, and Adaptive Capacity**

Societal attitudes toward aging, in tandem with individuals' evolving feelings about how old they feel, in part, determine their health. Investigators use a variety of research strategies to study this process and look at methods to maintain psychological well-being and physical function by teaching people to anticipate and adapt to age-related changes like retirement.

* **Age Smart Employer NYC**

In partnership with the New York Academy of Medicine, the Center promotes policies and practices that benefit multigenerational workforces and enhance business success. These awards are given to large and small employers to highlight the significance of older workers and raise awareness throughout the region about the exceptional contributions older adults make to the workplace.



Ursula M. Staudinger, PhD, director of the CAC, Robert N. Butler professor of Sociomedical Sciences, professor of Psychology, and president of the ILC U.S.A., is a lifespan psychologist and an internationally recognized aging researcher. Prior to joining Columbia in 2013, Dr. Staudinger focused on understanding productive aging, with an emphasis on education and the labor market at the Jacobs Center on Lifelong Learning and Institutional Development at Jacobs University Bremen. Previously, she held a chair in lifespan psychology at the Technical University Dresden and had been a senior researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin. Her research produced important findings on the plasticity of cognitive and personality aging as well as examining wisdom across the life span. Dr. Staudinger's academic leadership is also reflected in her appointments as Vice President and Foreign Secretary of the German National Academy of Sciences and Chairwoman of the Board of the Federal Institute of Population Research.

HELP US GROW

For information about contributing to science, medicine, and public health advances at the Center, please contact:

umstaudinger@columbia.edu
212.305.0424