Seminar on Nutrition and Life Course Approach to Healthy Aging

Summary Report

The International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) Southeast Asia Region Philippine Country Committee recently organized a seminar on “Nutrition and Life Course Approach to Healthy Aging.” The seminar was held last September 25, 2018, at Pan Pacific Hotel, Manila with the objectives of describing the aging process through the life course, characterizing the nutrition and health profile of older persons across the region, sharing recent studies on determinants of successful aging, describing nutrition and dietary approaches to reduce risk to sarcopenia, the aging brain and physical inactivity, providing update on new technologies on food product development and presenting efforts to promote a healthy aging agenda for the older persons. Some 136 participants from the academe, nutrition and health community, and food industry attended the seminar.

After the welcome remarks by the Country Coordinator, Dr. Celeste Tanchoco, Dr. Shelley de la Vega of the Institute of Aging of the University of the Philippines defined aging as the accumulation of changes responsible for the sequential alterations that accompany advancing age and the associated progressive increases in the chance of disease and death. Whereas, healthy Aging is the “the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age”. The talk focused on human development from young to late adulthood and the quality of life of the Filipino older persons and how to enable well-being at old age.

The session on Nutrition and Health Profile of Older Persons was started by Dr. Sofia Amarra of ILSI SEA Region. She presented the paper entitled, “Aging and Health across Southeast Asia: How does Philippines compare?” She pointed out that unlike other countries in the region (e.g., Thailand, Singapore), Philippines is not yet an aging population. However life expectancy and healthy life expectancy in the Philippines is much lower, and health status poorer. Mortality from non-communicable disease, unsafe water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH), household and ambient air pollution are among the highest in the region. She identified metabolic, behavioral and environmental risk factors and recommended studies to identify determinant of disease in order to propose best practices that will promote healthy and successful aging among Filipinos.

Ms. Marilou Madrid of Food and Nutrition Research Institute presented the paper on “Nutritional Status, Dietary Intake, Functional Capacity and Quality of Life (QOL) Among Urban Community-Dwelling Older Persons in the Philippines”. She concluded that both under- and over nutrition exists among older persons in NCR but they can still perform activities of daily life independently irrespective of age, BMI and health condition. The QOL assessment suggested a positive outlook
among the older persons, in general. She recommended that health care and support services should be made more accessible, as well as, nutrition and health education.

“Correlates of Cognitive Health in Filipino Women” was presented by Dr. Judith Rafaelita Borja from University of San Carlos. The paper presented a study which explained the cognitive function, measured through the Mini-Mental State Examination Philippine-Cebuano version (MMSE-PC) and the Clock Drawing Test (CDT), in a community-based sample of 46-79 year-old women from the Cebu Longitudinal Health and Nutrition Survey (CLHNS). Of the 574 women aged ≥60, about 46% were classified as cognitively impaired (MMSE-PC scores ≤ 23). The mean score for the 4-item CDT was 3.2 (±0.9) with lower scores among those ≥60 compared to younger women (mean 3.0 vs 3.4 respectively). A significant positive association was identified between having at least high-school level education and assets scores. Cognitive impairment is also known to exist with other morbidities. Poor CH was significantly associated with severe disability [activities of daily living (ADL), instrumental ADL and physical limitations].

Dr. Eduardo Poblete of St. Luke’s Medical Center expounded on the “Determinants of Successful Aging”. As there is no current consensus of the definition of successful aging, he offered the concept that successful aging is the absence of depressive symptoms, cognitive impairment and symptoms of respiratory and systemic disorders.

Dr. Satoshi Fujita of Ritsumeikan University, Japan talked about “Dietary Approach to Reduce Sarcopenia Risk”. Dr. Fujita stressed that nutrient intake is the most important anabolic stimuli for skeletal muscle. Specifically, intake of protein / amino acids (especially leucine) stimulate muscle protein synthesis. However, age-specific changes in muscle anabolic responses to amino acid leucine becomes apparent in older subjects. Consequently, recent evidence indicates that dietary protein intake below RDA in older individuals further accelerates the age-associated muscle loss. Resistance exercise is another anabolic stimuli which increases muscle protein synthesis in both young and older individuals.

Different forms of cognitive impairment of the aging brain was discussed by Dr. Delfin Darwin Dasig of Makati Medical Center. Dr. Dasig discussed cognitive functioning in the normal elderly (successful aging) and cognitive functioning in disorders frequently encountered by the elderly particularly Mild Cognitive Impairment and Dementia (Alzheimer’s disease, Vascular Dementia, Dementia with Lewy Body and Frontotemporal Dementia). The presentation also included other risk factors for cognitive impairment and measures to maintain good cognitive function.

Prof. Hercules Callanta of the University of the Philippines Diliman discussed “Exercise for Health among the Older People”. He stressed that Exercise provides a host of gains to health and fitness that can improve muscular strength, flexibility and range of motion, balance, and overall functional independence among older people (Chin, et al. 2006). Researches also showed reduced all-cause mortality and reduced risk of developing conditions such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes (Bruce, Fries and Hubert, 2007). It also helps control weight gain, and
keeps lost weight off. Still other studies show that it can improve mood, regularize sleep, boost energy and even bring back the spark to one’s sex life.

The food technologies for older persons presented by Dr. Marissa V. Romero of PhilRice was on the paper entitled, “The Rice Way for Long Quality Living”. She pointed that moderate rice consumption is recommended for quality living. Aside from the right amount of rice intake, healthier forms of rice should be consumed. These include brown rice, germinated brown rice, pigmented rice, low-protein rice, and others which contain higher amounts of nutrients or health-promoting properties than the commonly consumed milled or polished rice. The development of functional rice through modern breeding tools holds great promise and benefits. Rice with beta carotene (Golden rice) that can be converted to Vitamin A in the body aims to reduce Vitamin A deficiency. Iron- and zinc-dense rices target to combat anemia and zinc deficiency, respectively. She concluded that Healthier rice consumption is indeed the key to long quality living.

Engr. Rosemarie Garcia of Food and Nutrition Research Institute described three potential functional food products: ready-to-drink yacon (Smallanthus sonchifolius) juice, stabilized brown rice (Oryza sativa L.) and germinated brown rice beverage. The main raw materials used including the health benefits of each final product was discussed. Two nutrition tools, the Menu Guide Calendar and Pinggang Pinoy were included in the presentation. The calendar aims to highlight the importance of planning for nutritious and affordable meals. This articulates how the Institute reaches out in its advocacy towards healthy eating, using easy to follow recipes, cycle menus and a food plate model, specifically recommended for older persons.

“Efforts to Promote a Healthy Aging Agenda for the Population” was presented by Dr. Rosa Minerva Vinluan of the Department of Health. The Department of Health issued Administrative Orders for health implementers to undertake and promote the health and wellness of senior citizens as well as to alleviate the conditions of older persons who are encountering degenerative diseases. The Health and Wellness Program for Senior Citizen (HWPSC) of the DOH intends to provide focused service delivery packages and integrated continuum of quality care, patient-centered and environment standard to ensure safety and accessibility for senior citizens, equitable health financing, capacitated health providers in the implementation of health programs for senior citizens, data base management, and strengthened coordination and collaboration with other stakeholders involved in the implementation of programs for senior citizens.

To conclude the seminar, Ms. Jo Ann Marie Salamat, the committee chairman, thanked the speakers for their excellent presentations, and the participants for their attendance at the seminar.