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<http://www.who.int/about/gpw-thirteen-consultation/en/>

**RE: World Health Organization Draft 13<sup>th</sup> General Programme of Work**

The American Geriatrics Society (AGS) greatly appreciates the opportunity to comment on the World Health Organization's (WHO's) draft 13<sup>th</sup> General Programme of Work (GPW13).

The AGS is a not-for-profit organization representing over 5,000 geriatrics health professionals. Our members include geriatricians, advanced practice nurses, social workers, physician assistants, and pharmacists. In addition, our physician membership includes internal medicine, surgical, and related medical specialties as well as family practitioners who have an interest in the geriatrics aspects of their specialists. The AGS provides leadership to healthcare professionals, policy makers and the public by implementing and advocating for programs in patient care, research, professional and public education, and public policy. It is our mission to improve the health, independence, and quality of life of all older people.

Given WHO's leadership and dedication to global public health, the AGS was both surprised and disappointed to see that the document did not mention age-related health issues. As the world's older population continues to grow at an unprecedented rate, it is more important than ever for WHO to prioritize the public health needs of older adults.

Today, 8.5 percent of people worldwide (617 million) are aged 65 and over. According to a recent international population report—"An Aging World: 2015"—this percentage is projected to jump to nearly 17 percent of the world's population by 2050 (1.6 billion).<sup>1</sup> While we are living longer, diseases and conditions that threaten the health of older people remain a serious concern. Especially as the "oldest old"—people age 80 and older—who are at the highest risk of having multiple health problems constitute the fastest growing segment of the global population.<sup>1</sup>

With these major demographic shifts, there is an urgent need for research and research scientists in aging focused on improving the health and quality of life of all older people. We also need more healthcare professionals who understand and can apply expert principles to support our health, independence, and well-being as we age.

For the reasons discussed above, the AGS strongly recommends that WHO prioritize these areas in its GPW13. Please contact Anna Mikhailovich at [amikhailovich@americangeriatrics.org](mailto:amikhailovich@americangeriatrics.org) or 212-308-1414 if you would like to discuss any of our comments further.

Reference:

1. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p95-16-1.pdf>