

## Day One, Afternoon – Global strategies to local activists



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Building upon the **success of the morning**, this afternoon has taken us from the Global – hearing about the World Health Organisation and their global strategy on ageing and health – to the local – with the Malaysian experience of working at a small scale to develop their first dementia friendly community within a local shopping mall.

Such a wealth of experience among both the delegates and the speakers becomes ever more apparent this afternoon – as we hear about how personal passion and commitment merges with hard statistics and facts to create game changing initiatives that can and will transform the ageing experience.

John Beard provided some **key insight into research carried out by the World Health Organisation**, talking particularly about the impact of advantage and disadvantage on ageing – emphasising that the way in which societies respond to ageing must not reinforce the inequities that already exist. In fact policy makers must ensure that their responses really address the inequalities that are present within all societies across the globe.

The starting point must be to focus in on the things that people want to do:- to meet their basic needs, to learn, grow and make decisions, be mobile, build and maintain relationships and critically contribute. However, as John reminded us, the ability to do these things is wholly dependent on context and the tools and environment that surround us impacts on our ability to do these things. This environment can help to compensate or adapt to losses.

This focus on the environment and the knowledge and understanding of ageing within communities was starkly brought to life by Sailesh Mishra, who talked about his experience of **providing pioneering dementia services** within India. His representation of the stigma and exclusion experienced by people living with dementia in India, despite India having the second largest older peoples population in the world, was mirrored by Chief Kikelomo Laninyonu Edwards, who talked about her mission to **spread knowledge and understanding about dementia across Kenya**.

The World Health Organisation has five key components in their global strategy. One of these looks at the creation of age friendly environments. Datin Jacqueline WM Wong gave us another fascinating insight into pioneering the **development of the first dementia friendly space** in Malaysia. Again, the importance of overcoming cultural misconceptions around dementia was a key component of being able to generate a small scale partnership with a local shopping mall, enabling people living with dementia, carers and their families using the space for activities, relaxation, knowledge and awareness raising. Jacqueline's dementia friendly space joins the over 570 dementia friendly communities that now exist across the globe. Alongside this, Jeremy Hughes, the CEO of Alzheimer's Society reminded us, there are now **around 14 million Dementia Friends** with schemes existing in over 30 countries. Carey Mulligan, as the Alzheimer's Society Global Dementia Friends Ambassador, **provided the conference with a personal message**, asking us to unite against dementia, and work together to create a dementia friendly global community.

## Ageing in Common NCF & CommonAge Care Conference

Yet – we were reminded by speakers and delegates again and again, that this is not enough. The prevalence of ageism is endemic across the globe. We have to move away from thinking in terms of ‘young’ and ‘old’ – life is a continuum – and many of the speakers talked about the urgent need to redefine how we think about the socially constructed notion of ‘old’.

These are huge societal and cultural changes that are needed. Jaco Hoffman, commenting on the CommonAge research reminded us ‘If you want to move mountains tomorrow, you must move rocks today’ – but the data and stats would tell us – that we better start moving those rocks quickly.

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