

Early-life Conditions and the Onset of Cognitive Impairment among the Oldest-Old in China¹

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Abstract

Research in developed countries show that early-life conditions are associated with morbidity and mortality in later life. Our paper adds to this growing body of literature by examining the association between early-life conditions and the onset of cognitive impairment among the oldest old in China. We address two questions: (1) Are early-life conditions associated with the onset of cognitive impairment among the oldest old in China?; and (2) Do adult SES, social support, physical health, and lifestyle mediate the effect of early-life environment on cognitive impairment? We draw on two waves (1998-2000) of the Chinese Healthy Longevity Survey. Early-life environment is indexed by place of birth, father's occupation, whether the subject went to bed hungry in childhood, and education of the subject. Results show that adverse early-life conditions significantly increase the risk of cognitive impairment among the oldest old in china after controlling for various adulthood risk factors.

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