



UN IDOP 2025

United Nations International Day of Older Persons



Event in Celebration of the International Day of Older Persons 2025 (UN IDOP)

‘Highlighting the Role of the Brain for Healthy Ageing’

Date: September 26, 2025

Time: 14:00 (CET) – in person and online

Place: United Nations Vienna

Presenters, Titles and Short Bios of the speakers

Title: UN Decade of Healthy Ageing: A Midpoint Reflection and Forward Strategy
(Keynote)

Presenter: Alana Officer

Abstract: At the midpoint of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030), this presentation reflects on emerging global efforts and explores strategic opportunities for the next five years. It considers actions to address ageism, foster age-friendly environments, integrate care, and improve access to long-term care—while acknowledging gaps and disruptions, including those exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As inequalities in healthy life expectancy persist, the coming years offer a crucial opportunity to build on momentum, strengthen multisectoral collaboration, and promote inclusive, rights-based approaches to ageing. Ahead of the next formal progress report, the presentation offers forward-looking insights to inform and inspire continued global action through 2030.

Bio: Alana Officer’s academic background spans Podiatric Medicine, Applied Science (Exercise and Sports Science) and Public Health. Prior to joining WHO, Alana held a range of clinical and managerial positions working on health, disability, rehabilitation and development in Africa, Europe, South Asia, the Middle East and the Western Pacific.

After 8 years of leading WHO Headquarters work on disability, Alana joined the ageing team to lead the development of the World Report on Ageing and Health (2015) and the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021-2030.

Alana now heads the Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing (DHA) unit and coordinates the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the UN Decade and oversees the organizations work on age-friendly environments including the Global Network on Age-friendly Cities and Communities and the Global Campaign to Combat Ageism. She also coordinates the recently established Commission on Social Connection (2023 -2026).

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Title: Measuring and Increasing the Brain Health Span across Adulthood – A Global Health Imperative (Keynote – online)

Presenter: Sandra Bond Chapman, PhD

Abstract: Boosting brain health is the key driver of great health and economic growth; yet we fail to tend to our brain health until we experience brain disease or decline. Dr. Chapman will share new breakthroughs from the BrainHealth Project revealing that brain health optimization can be

1) measured for the first time at scale and

2) enhanced with simple strategies and self-agency, regardless of starting level, age or education. Advances in heart health have increased our lifespan with a focus on healthy practices long before heart problems arise. Now, this landmark study is revealing that brain healthy practices can extend our peak brain years to better align with our increased longevity.

Bio: Sandra Bond Chapman is Chief Director of Center for BrainHealth® at The University of Texas at Dallas and Dee Wyly Distinguished University Professor in the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences. She is committed to enhancing human cognitive capacity and the underlying brain systems across the lifespan.

Dr. Chapman is co-creator of The BrainHealth® Project, a collaboration of 32 of the world's leading brain health experts focused on doubling peak brain performance, inoculating against decline and extending brain capacity to match our longer lifespan.

With more than 50 funded research grants and 200+ peer-reviewed publications, Dr. Chapman directs clinical trials dedicated to developing, testing and applying novel and multi-dimensional approaches to build cognitive capacity and well-being, improve life function and enhance supporting brain systems. She leads major international efforts to deliver the first-of-its-kind BrainHealth® Index – a composite measure of brain health – to motivate improvement in three broad domains: clarity, connectedness and emotional balance.

She is committed to democratizing access to strategies and tools to achieve for brain health what has been done for heart health. Her work is transforming how we care for our brain before something goes wrong, removing stigma, and elevating brain health with scientifically validated measurements, interventions and practices.

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Title: Begin with the Brain: Real-World Solutions for Health and Longevity

Presenters: Maciej D. Zatonski, MD, FFPM, PhD and Sara L. Farwell, PhD

Abstract: We live in a time of extraordinary technology progress, medical advancements, and global connectivity. We have access to most of our knowledge, AI guides, trainers, nutritionists, and coaches at our fingertips. Modern medicines allow us to live longer than ever and survive diseases that were fatal less than a century ago.

Yet – we also live at the time of a collapse of personal relationships, the highest rates of divorce, declining educational scores, the highest prevalence of loneliness, overreliance on pharmaceuticals, and an unprecedented, major mental health crisis.

The common denominator across this paradox? The Human Brain, the center of our decision-making, relationships, physical health, and longevity.

Brainspan – the capacity for cognitive, emotional, and social vitality – is increasingly recognised as essential not only for preventing age-related cognitive decline or dementia, but a foundation for overall longevity and life-long wellbeing. While large-scale studies and global initiatives have helped define its importance, brain health is still often addressed separately from other pillars of healthy aging such as physical performance, nutrition, supplementation, or overall disease prevention. Through real-world examples and individualised programming, we demonstrate how cognitive conditioning enhances adherence to health behaviours, reinforces resilience, and leads to measurable cognitive and physical changes. Focused cognitive conditioning enables more effective integration of physical activity, nutrition, sleep and work habits which further reduce the risk of all of the four major causes of mortality and culprits against longevity. We present an integrated, brain-first model of health and longevity and highlight how this approach can be taken at any age to improve both short-term success and life satisfaction and long-term health outcomes.

Bios: Maciej Zatonski and Sara Farwell are the co-founders of Solutions Makers, a science-driven consultancy that combines medicine, cognitive & physical training, and executive mentoring to enhance cognitive performance and resilience for personal and professional longevity.

Dr. Zatonski is a board-certified pharmaceutical physician, author, and former Head and Neck Surgeon with expertise in disease prevention, sleep medicine, and cognitive optimisation. He has held senior leadership roles in the pharmaceutical R&D industry and brings over 20 years of experience to high-level professionals and organizations.

Dr. Farwell is a cardiovascular biologist and certified physical performance and nutrition expert. She held previous leadership roles in the vaccines industry and has mentored professionally and academically for over a decade.

Together, they combine their experience in disease prevention, nutrition, physical fitness, mental wellbeing, and executive coaching to provide people with effective solutions for cognitive and physical health and success. They translate cutting-edge science and apply practical tools for individuals and teams to enhance mental clarity, decision-making, and their long-term potential to thrive.

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Title: Confident Aging: Findings from the BrainHealth Project (Online)

Presenter: Prof. Ian Robertson

Abstract: Confidence in one's cognitive and emotional capacities enhances performance in both, while lack of confidence does the reverse. Negative aging stereotypes undermine confidence because they reduce the perception of self-agency and control. Lack of self-agency about one's mental capacities must inevitably lead to a reduction in one's sense of control over the external world. The BrainHealth Project (<https://centerforbrainhealth.org/science/the-brainhealth-project>) has shown in over four thousand people over 4 years that it is possible to improve brain health (cognition, emotion and social connection/purpose) and that a key potential mediator of these improvements is increased confidence and self-agency in taking action to improve their brain health.

Bio: Ian Robertson is T Boone Pickens Distinguished Chair at the University of Texas at Dallas and Professor Emeritus at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland. He is a co-investigator on the UT Dallas BrainHealth Project directed by Dr. Sandi Chapman. He has written over 600 scientific papers and books on neuropsychology, including discovering new ways of improving brain function in aging and

in brain impairment. In 2024 he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Science and an honorary MD by Trinity College Dublin in recognition of his research achievements.

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Title: From Lifespan to Healthspan: Rethinking Aging Through a Life Course Lens (Online)

Presenter: Sophia Casale

Abstract: Healthy aging is a lifelong process that begins well before old age, requiring attention across all stages of life. Rather than waiting for signs of decline, individuals, especially younger persons, should be encouraged to consider their own older adulthood and take proactive steps to enhance their healthspan, not just their lifespan. New scientific advances highlight that brain health and emotional well-being can be cultivated through simple, everyday practices that build resilience, purpose, and agency over time. An intergenerational perspective reminds us that investing in healthy aging benefits not only individuals but entire communities, fostering shared strength and connection across age groups. By embedding these values early in life, we empower future generations to redefine aging as a vibrant, intentional, and engaged chapter of life.

Bio: Sophia Casale is an early career professional in the field of ageing. Currently, she is a PhD student in Gerontology at the University of Massachusetts – Boston and a Research Assistant with the university's Gerontology Institute. Sophia has collaborated with her colleagues within these roles on research projects spanning local senior center improvements to internationally representative work for AARP and the WHO. Prior to this role, Sophia has worked as a Memory Care Assistant Lifestylist within a United States-based long-term care facility. Sophia's work in this role aimed to support the well-being, autonomy, and dignity of older persons with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia.

Sophia also served as a volunteer Project Coordinator for Gray Panthers NYC; an advocacy organization dedicated to confronting ageism, advancing the human rights of older persons, and promoting intergenerational solidarity. As a member of Gray Panthers NYC, Sophia has collaborated with others to create Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing as well as High-Level Political Forum side events and has co-led the organization's internship program as well. In November 2022, Sophia joined the NGO Committee on Ageing Geneva and has since supported the Committee in various ways. Most recently, she sat on the 2023 IDOP Planning Subcommittee and the Membership Survey Task Force. As a Member-at-Large, Sophia will continue to work closely with other members to meet the Committee's needs and advance the Committee's mission.

Sophia holds academic degrees in Psychology (BA) from Stockton University, US and Gerontology, Management of Aging Services (MS) from the University of Massachusetts – Boston, US.