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OECD Workshop 2000 on Healthy Ageing and Biotechnology

One of the greatest accomplishments of the 20th Century has been an enormous life span expansion for a great majority of the world’s population and the trend appears to be continuing. But as the share of the elderly grows to between one fifth and one fourth of our total populations, so too does the social and economic burden associated with age-related diseases and disabilities. OECD countries are searching for ways to promote healthy ageing.

Journalists and experts on issues related to ageing are invited to attend the OECD Workshop 2000 on Healthy Ageing and Biotechnology - Research and Policy Issues on 13-14 November 2000 in Tokyo. The Workshop will explore the scientific and healthcare policy issues facing governments as biotechnologies create new ways to detect, prevent, and treat age-related diseases and conditions. Speakers will discuss what age-related diseases and conditions are most prevalent and most costly to society, and thus where major scientific advances hold the most promise for improving elderly health and independence.

Biotechnology offers revolutionary techniques for reducing age-related disabilities. Immunisations and neuronal transplants for Alzheimer’s disease, growth hormones to combat frailty, and gene therapies for cancer are all in the research pipeline. Because of advances in biotechnology, we not only better understand the ageing process itself, but we are creating new medical interventions which will hopefully provide more efficient alternatives for the promotion of healthy ageing.

Governments, however, have to choose between a range of policy priorities, in areas such as research; incentives to prevent rather than treat disabilities; health care system reforms for providing better access to or choice of novel treatments; finding a new equilibrium between medical interventions and better long term care for the elderly; and ethical guidelines for the treatment of the elderly.

At the OECD Workshop 2000, Dr. Robert Fogel, Nobel Laureate in Economics and the session’s keynote speaker, will share his thoughts on the relationship of technology to health span and the costs to society of investing in the advancement of both. Individual sessions will cover: demographic trends and healthcare expenses; major scientific advances in understanding ageing; the applications of biotechnology to dementia, frailty, and the major “killer” diseases; and policy choices.

More information is available at: http://www.oecd.org/dsti/sti/s_t/biotech/ or e-mail us on: stibioregistration@oecd.org. For further information please contact Stella Horsin, OECD Science and Technology Division (tel. 33 1 45 24 89 89 or stella.horsin@oecd.org).

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