

Palmore Airs Plight of American Elderly

In America it would earn you an icy stare. But in Japan, asking an elderly person how old he is would be taken as a compliment, says Dr. Erdman Palmore.

Palmore, a professor of medical sociology, was interviewed Aug. 7 on Channel 5's Bette Elliott show.

He told Miss Elliott: "Most people in the U.S. are ashamed of their age; we spend billions of dollars dying our hair, for instance. But in Japan, most people are proud of their age."

"It's a very polite thing to do to greet somebody with, 'How old are you now?'"

"He might respond, 'I'm 70, going on 71.'"

"Then you respond, 'Congratulations! You're reaching the honorable year.'"

Palmore has written a book, to be entitled "The Honorable Elders," on how the Japanese treat their older citizens. The Duke Press plans to publish the book next January.

Palmore said a Japanese law states that the elderly are to be honored. "They're guaranteed the right to work and to contribute to society," he said.

The professor said mandatory

retirement at age 65 is "one of the most outrageous things in our society." Older workers, he said, are "in many ways, superior to younger workers; they're more experienced, they're more stable workers, and they have a low absentee rate."

Almost 80 per cent of Japanese older people live with their children, he said. "Rather, their children live with them—it's their household," he added. In America, the percentage of elderly citizens living with their children falls to 20-25 per cent, he said.

Turning from Japan, Palmore attacked myths about older people.

He asked Miss Elliott to guess what percentage of Americans over 65 are in a nursing home or other institution. She guessed 25 per cent.

"Some people guess 60 or 75 per cent," the professor said. "The correct figure is only 5 per cent. Ninety-five per cent are out in the community taking care of themselves."

Palmore said it's not true that old age has to mean mental decline. An elderly person "may maintain a steady state of functioning for years," he said.

Those who do slip mentally, he said, may be neglecting their bodies "because of a combined loss of income and a loss of some of their health."

"They give up; they retire to a rocking chair; they don't get any exercise. When you don't use a muscle, it deteriorates and this happens to the brain. If you sit in a stupor all day, your brain deteriorates."

Being "over the hill" needn't be a curse, Palmore said. He recalled an older man who beamed, "When you're over the hill, you pick up speed."



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Registration Begins Monday

Motor vehicle registration for medical center personnel begins Monday.

The registration fee is \$20 and may be paid in cash or by payroll deduction. The motorcycle registration fee is \$10 and must be paid in cash.

Documents and information that must be presented at the time of registration include a valid driver's license, current state vehicle registration card and a social security card.

All members of the house staff should register their vehicle at the House Staff Office, Rm M-131 of the Davison Bldg.

For the convenience of other medical center personnel, the Parking and Traffic Office again will send registrars to buildings throughout the medical center campus.

The registration schedule is as follows:

HOSPITAL—In Medical Center Board Room (first floor, yellow zone, next to chapel), Monday, Aug. 18, through Wednesday, Aug. 20, from 8 a.m.-Noon, 1 p.m.-4:30 p.m. and from 7 p.m.-1 a.m.

NANALINE H. DUKE BUILDING—First floor, main entrance, Thursday, Aug. 21, 8:30-11 a.m.

ALEX H. SANDS BUILDING, RESEARCH PARK, VIVARIUM, ALIF BUILDINGS—Sands Bldg., first floor, main entrance, Thursday, Aug. 21, 1-4:30 p.m. and Friday, Aug. 22, 8:30-11 a.m.

EYE CENTER—Conference Room, second floor, Friday, Aug. 22, 1-4:30 p.m.

PICKENS BUILDING—Conference Room, Monday, Aug. 25, 8:30-11 a.m.

CHILD GUIDANCE, CIVITAN BUILDINGS—Child Guidance, first floor, main entrance, Monday, Aug. 25, 1-4:30 p.m.

HANES HOUSE, HANES ANNEX, GRADUATE CENTER—Hanes House Lobby, Tuesday, Aug. 26, 8:30-11 a.m.

BELL BUILDING—Room 314, Tuesday, Aug. 26, 1-4:30 p.m.

BELL BUILDING—Room 314, Wednesday, Aug. 27, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

HANES HOUSE, HANES ANNEX, GRADUATE CENTER—Hanes House Lobby, Wednesday, Sept. 3, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (registration for nursing and graduate center students)

New parking decals must be displayed by September 1. All others who want to register vehicles may do so on Wednesday, Aug. 27 in Room 314 in the Bell Bldg. (as listed) or thereafter from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday.

Prof Explains Link Between Diabetes, Excess Weight

A Duke physician says some adults can get rid of diabetes simply by losing excess weight.

Shedding pounds, said Dr. Jay Skyler, can unlock a natural supply of insulin that a diabetic can't use as long as he's obese.

"Here's a 34-year-old man who had diabetes for 10 years," he said, picking up a patient's chart. "He went from 280 pounds to 168 pounds, and his diabetes went away."

Skyler is an assistant professor of medicine. He spoke recently at a workshop sponsored by the National Commission on Diabetes. The Duke physician was a workshop co-chairman.

"Diabetes is a hormone imbalance," Skyler explained in an interview. "It prevents a person from burning sugars and other nutrients for body energy. It's recognized principally by high sugar levels in the patient's blood or urine."

Too much sugar in the blood for a prolonged period can kill, he said. It makes a person more prone to heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure and blindness. He said diabetes is the second leading cause of new blindness.

Insulin—a hormone produced in the pancreas—keeps the blood sugar level in check for most people, Skyler pointed out. But in obese persons, this balance is upset.

"Obesity causes resistance to the action of insulin," the physician said. He explained that insulin must link up with body cells before it can do its job. This linking ability is impaired in overweight people, he said.

Losing weight, he pointed out, can end the resistance. And the patient's diabetes may vanish.

Eight out of 10 people with diabetes are obese, he said. A quarter of the American population inherits a tendency to have diabetes; obesity

brings out the disease in those with this tendency, he added.

Skyler also had this tip: Adults who don't have diabetes may be able to avoid it by keeping their weight down.

Doctors "could prevent most of the diabetes we see," he said, by convincing their overweight patients to stick to a diet.

Adams Earns Cancer Grant

A federal grant announced this week may help a Duke researcher beef up the body's defenses against cancer.

The researcher, Dr. Dolph O. Adams, said he hopes to make disease-fighting white cells in the body attack tumors more fiercely than they do now.

Adams is an assistant professor of pathology. The National Cancer Institute awarded him \$87,480 for his study.

Some scientists believe the body destroys as many as 1,000 cancer cells every day. White cells called macrophages should take part in this destruction, but sometimes don't, Adams said.

"People know very little about what makes macrophages kill better," he said. "We do know, however, that if macrophages are activated, that is, altered metabolically, they will kill better."

Working with mice, Adams will be testing ways of peppering up the white cells. He will try to equip the cells with compounds (antibodies) that will help them sense the target cancer cells. Macrophages without these antibodies seem to have a harder

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