

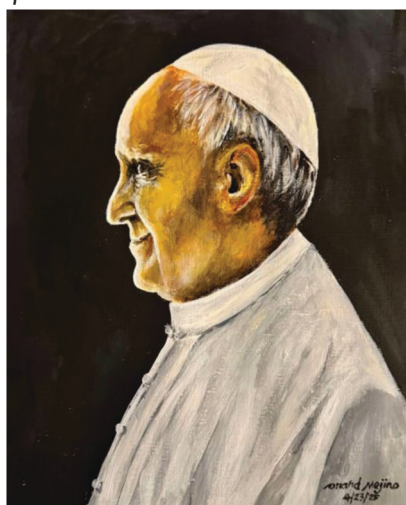
JMUST Editorial

Cracked Smile of Time: Healthy Aging



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"We must not be afraid of old age; we must not fear embracing becoming old, because life is life, and sugarcoating reality means betraying the truth of things." Pope Francis



As a physician, I view healthy aging as the process of maintaining well-being while growing older. It involves managing physical, mental and social health to ensure a good quality of life with as much independence as possible.

According to global statistics from the WHO, one in six people will be aged 60 or older by 2030. [1] Let us call this age group "seniors." By 2050, the senior population is expected to reach 2.1 billion—double the 1.4 billion recorded in 2020 [1] To put this into perspective: if seniors were grouped into a single geographical region, their population would rival that of China or India, each with over a billion people. The senior population is no small matter; in

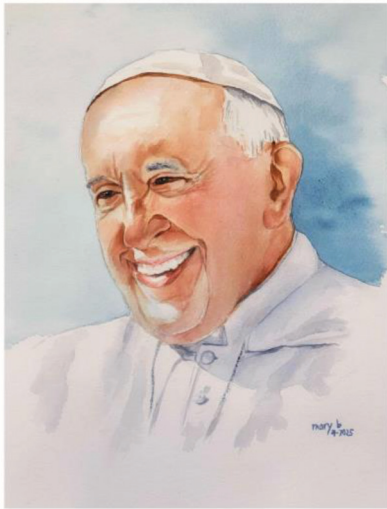
2020, seniors even outnumbered children aged five and below. [1]

As we know, chronic conditions such as COPD, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, neurodegenerative diseases and metabolic bone disorders are common among seniors. Scientists and clinicians around the world are actively engaged in clinical research to develop medical and therapeutic solutions for these age-related conditions.

Advances in technology and medical expertise have greatly improved screening, diagnosis, preventive care and treatments. Seniors benefit significantly from these advancements. Many of them also take an active role in their health by seeking medical information and knowledge to better address their concerns. Healthy lifestyle choices—such as regular exercise, a balanced diet, quality sleep, avoiding smoking and limiting alcohol consumption—further contribute to healthy aging.

With human lifespan now averaging around 78 years, it is inspiring to think of Pope Francis, who lived a decade longer, passing at age 88. His life inspired my metaphor of the "cracked smile of time." For me, Pope Francis' genuine smile, marked by wrinkles and health struggles, reflected not sadness or negativity, but wisdom and compassion. We can learn from his example, embracing healthy aging with vigilance over our health—and a cracked, yet joyful, smile for all.

For this issue, we are glad to align with the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas' remembrance of Pope Francis in our cover....



Articles included for this present volume are, four observational studies, two prospective studies, one each of research protocol, cross-sectional study, validation study, lived experience study, medical education and a viewpoint, for a total of twelve JMUST articles.

We are very grateful to our editorial team for, once again, taking the time and patience to review articles for our publication.

REFERENCE:

1. Ageing and health [Internet]. Who.int. [cited 2025]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health>

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