

ABOUT YENI YUZYIL UNIVERSITY SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY CENTER: YESGUM

YESGUM, which stands for YENI YUZYIL UNIVERSITESI SOSYAL GERONTOLOJI UYGULAMA VE ARASTIRMA MERKEZI, is a comprehensive umbrella organization which provides interdisciplinary studies in the field of social gerontology. There is no other organization of its kind presently in Turkey, thus, YESGUM is timely and a leader in this field. Gerontology looks at the process of aging from the perspective of social science, physical science, education, economics and policy making, communications, medicine, business applications, institutions and organizations. The influence culture has on decision making for the care of the patient, as well as how these results impact family members is of particular interest to gerontological research.

Today “agedness” is a period of life which consumes and will continue to take up to one third (1/3) of our lives. The social aging phenomenon has become a global problem. The number of psychologically ill, isolated, and lonely aged individuals has been increasing; also the widespread uses of alcoholism, drug dependence and suicide have become a reality. Specifically in Turkey, according to Profs. I. Tufan and H. Yaman, University of Antalya, 4th International Social and applied Gerontology Symposium, the topics of nursing neediness, elderly violence, negligence and abuse are issues that need to be brought to the forefront of the elderly agenda. Additionally, in Turkey, one of the primary problems arising from longevity is the increased number of Alzheimer’s patients. Aging and agedness are multidimensional and a complex subject. At the end of 2009, Turkey’s total population was 72,561.312. There was a growth rate of 1.45% compared to 2008. Most significantly, the growth rate of the population that is above 65 years of age jumped up by 3.88% in 2009, and those between the ages of 30-65 rose by 3.0%. This means that, following the aging trend of other developed and developing countries, **TURKEY IS BEGINNING TO AGE SIGNIFICANTLY**. Focusing on social gerontology for medical and social science experts in Turkey has become imperative and timely.

Because gerontology is the interdisciplinary study of the social, physical and cultural dimensions of aging, gerontologists create healthy environments for the aging population. Since there is an increase of people living longer worldwide, there is a need for people to be trained in understanding the complex relationship between aging and society. Concurrently, serious training programs must be developed to ensure the proper care of an aging population. Particularly in Turkey this need is growing stronger by the day.

While it becomes harder to give homecare to the elderly (couples working, not physically capable to provide the care needed, and the special needs medically and financially of old age), most Turks are reluctant to put their elders into nursing homes. Such a choice is contrary to traditional cultural beliefs, values, and the emphasis put on reverence given to seniors. Therefore, in consideration of these demands put on our culture by “old age”, Yeni Yuzyil University has developed a special interest in this field. We have developed a specifically tailored center, YESGUM, which will conduct research and applications in the field of gerontology. Students at Yeni Yuzyil, as well as the public, will receive education and training in gerontological subjects. Our programs will introduce students to the multiple dimensions of the subject of aging.

Departments and institutions which will participate in YESGUM activities are as follows: medical, dental and pharmaceutical departments, hospitals and other elderly related facilities, vocational health college, health sciences and health management, anthropology and social science, liberal arts, communications, arts-music-dance, public relations, marketing, international relations and the like. Topics which will be researched are such things as:

- Healthy Aging (case studies the of elderly who are happy, healthy and well adjusted)
- Degenerative Diseases (dementia, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, osteoporosis etc.)
- The Patient's World and Others In It (mental and emotional health of the care takers and family)
- Gerontological Economics and Policy Issues (cost to provide services to the elderly/policies for care)
- Support and Service Systems (both institutional and homecare, needs of the caregivers)
- Out Migration/In Migration (problems of elderly outside the country, those coming into Turkey)
- Matching Changing Needs of Patience and Healthcare Institutions (organizational re-structuring)
- Gerontological Tourism (those coming to Turkish for treatment and surgery)
- Elderly Communication Issues (communication breakdown, impaired comprehension and response)
- Cross Cultural Comparisons On Elderly Care and Gerontology (Turkey's global position)
- Issues on Death and Dying (outreach to patients and families for hospice care)

In brief, our center includes and hopes to expand programs which examine medical, organizational, educational, socio-psychological and cultural problems that come with an aging population. Communication plays a key factor in relations with the elderly. We also think concentrating on healthy aging in terms of food choices, preparations needed for and required by old age, recreational activities and exercise are equally important when looking at this topic. We strongly believe the research YESGUM is doing and the public service we wish to provide aligns with the goals of Yeni Yuzyil University.

Head of YESGUM