The proportion of older population in Canada and elsewhere in the world is forecast to increase in the next several decades. The economic, medical and social costs of this change will likely be considerable. Modern medicine and new insights into lifestyle and other environmental influences are allowing more people to remain healthy and socially and emotionally vital into advanced ages. As life expectancy increases, however, physical, social and psychological deficits that threaten the health of older people remain a concern. Our ability to promote healthy aging and reduce the burden of illness among older adults will depend on increased understanding of the dynamics of aging and how they interact with various environmental and lifestyle factors. There is thus a need to explore “aging” as an intricate web of interdependent genetic, biochemical, physiological, economic, social, and psychological factors. This presentation will provide an overview of such research involving Canadian and international collaborative projects that use interdisciplinary approaches to understand the dynamics of aging.

Can I Reduce My Risk for Developing Alzheimer’s Disease?

Barbara B. Bendlin, PhD
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Medicine - Geriatrics, University of Wisconsin
Wisconsin Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center

Recent research findings suggest that certain risk factors for Alzheimer’s may be modifiable. Diet, exercise, sleep, and cognitive stimulation are areas of increasing interest, but does the science back them up? This talk will present the latest findings on lifestyle factors that may be linked with healthy brain and cognitive aging.

Work and Family Experiences Across the Life Course: Implications for Well-Being at Older Ages

James M. Raymo, PhD
Professor, Department of Sociology;
Director, Center for Demography and Ecology; UW-Madison

We know that work and family circumstances in mid and later life contribute to differences in health and economic security, but the role of earlier work and family experiences is less clear. Do life histories matter above and beyond current work and family circumstances? In this presentation, I use information collected over a period of fifty years from a large group of Wisconsin high school graduates to describe work and family experiences across the life course and their relationships with financial well-being, physical health, emotional health, and survival.

Understanding Pathways to Type 2 Diabetes

Vera Tsenkova, PhD
Assistant Scientist, UW-Madison

Type 2 diabetes is a common chronic disease with well-established risk factors such as obesity, physical inactivity, and having a family history of diabetes. Recent evidence points to powerful roles of the social environment and psychological outlooks in shaping risk and protection from this disease. Considering combinations of these diverse influences on Type 2 diabetes can help us better understand who is at risk and why.