



## Understanding ageing: fear of chronic diseases later in life

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### Abstract

**Objectives:** Ageing is often associated with deteriorating mental and physical health and the need for long-term care, creating a fear of ageing. We investigated what people fear most in terms of disabling chronic diseases and their concerns regarding having long-term illnesses.

**Methods:** Data were obtained from an online survey of 518 respondents aged 40 years and older residing in Malaysia, which was based on a convenience sample collected in May 2015 to January 2016. Data were analyzed using chi-squared tests and multinomial logistic regression.

**Results:** Of the most dreaded diseases, heart disease and cancer are life-threatening; however, dementia, diabetes, and hypertension persist and have a disabling effect for a long time. While there were variations in the diseases feared most across sex, ethnicity, and place of residence, the biggest worry for all respondents with regard to having a long-term illness was that they would become a burden to their family, a concern that superseded a fear of dying.

**Conclusions:** We found our survey respondents had a fear of chronic diseases and placing a burden on others. Thus, there is a need to provide motivation for people to adopt a healthy lifestyle, to remain healthy.

### Keywords

Ageing, fear, disabling diseases, burden to family, dying [AQ2]

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### Introduction

As much as people wish to stay youthful and no matter to what lengths they will go to remain young, some degree of depressing thoughts about ageing linger in the minds of most people. Mental and physical decline, losing loved ones, not being able to financially support oneself or loved ones, and becoming a burden or dependent on family members and friends are some of the reasons

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