



Recognition at last: People ageing with Post-Polio Syndrome

In November 2022, the Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) co-hosted a workshop in collaboration with Post Polio Victoria and Celebrate Ageing Ltd. The aim of the workshop was to contribute to the health and wellbeing of people ageing with Polio by educating service providers and community members on the experiences and needs of people ageing with Polio.

Key points

- ❖ Australia is home to some 73,000 Polio survivors
- ❖ Post-Polio Syndrome (PPS) is a condition that affects Polio survivors decades after their infection
- ❖ PPS can have a significant effect on overall health and wellbeing, and the capacity for older adults with PPS to age well
- ❖ Although PPS symptoms vary between individuals, they generally include:
 - ❖ Muscle weakness and atrophy, chronic fatigue, pain and respiratory problems
 - ❖ Increased sensitivity to cold, trouble swallowing and poor sleep
- ❖ Because health and aged care providers generally know little about Polio or PPS, patients' symptoms and experiences are often poorly recognised and understood
- ❖ Polio survivors want health practitioners to listen, recognise PPS and offer an empathetic, sensible approach to the managing each person's symptoms
- ❖ To help them age well and with dignity, Polio survivors need equipment to assist with mobility and ventilation, and the modification of living environments to support independence at home
- ❖ Polio survivors need better access to assistive technology and home modifications through aged care policy and practice
 - ❖ Disability support often involves equipment and resources for adjustment that aged care often cannot provide
 - ❖ Access and inclusion can be optimised through telehealth and other virtual services
 - ❖ Where possible, service providers should be creative in how they design and deliver services, drawing on different funding and support options

For too long, Polio survivors have been hidden in society and largely forgotten.

Many of us don't understand Polio and the unique experiences and needs of people ageing with Post Polio Syndrome.

It's important to learn from diverse perspectives and understand how to be more inclusive.

Health services must be tailored to different requirements ... Polio impacts every person differently.

The full workshop [report](#) is available on the AAG website at www.aag.asn.au. It offers recommendations to inform policy and improve practice to better meet the needs of older adults with PPS. For more information, contact Shirley: info@postpolio victoria.org.au or 0431 702 137

