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Letter to the Editor

Cognitive decline among Chinese older adults: Findings from the Chinese Longitudinal Healthy Longevity Survey (CLHLS)



Letter to the Editor

China has the world's largest ageing population and the greatest number of individuals living with dementia [1]. Until the early 21st century, however, most scientific evidence on cognitive decline and dementia was derived from Western populations. With accelerating population ageing and growing demands for dementia care, there is an urgent need to clarify the trajectories and determinants of cognitive health in China. The Chinese Longitudinal Healthy Longevity Survey (CLHLS), the country's largest ageing cohort, has been instrumental in advancing this understanding [2].

Analyses from the CLHLS have revealed a U-shaped trajectory in the prevalence of cognitive impairment, a pattern that warrants further exploration [1]. Four distinct cognitive trajectories have been identified, including a "no-decline" trajectory characterised by stable cognition across late life. This finding is encouraging, underscoring that cognitive decline is not an inevitable feature of ageing.

The CLHLS has also provided novel insights into risk and protective factors. Long-term exposure to ambient air pollution has been associated with accelerated decline [3], whereas habitual tea consumption appears protective [4]. Moreover, evidence of gene-environment interactions, such as the interplay between tea consumption and FOXO genotypes, highlights the complexity of cognitive ageing [4].

As the CLHLS enters its fourth decade, further discoveries are expected. These findings will be vital for informing policymakers, guiding clinical practice, and raising public awareness, thereby shaping strategies to preserve cognitive health in later life. The continued contributions of this landmark study will remain central to addressing the challenges of dementia in China's rapidly ageing society.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

I have not used any AI at all.

CRediT authorship contribution statement


Kaisy Xinhong Ye: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Lei Feng:** Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing. **Tih-Shih Lee:** Writing – review & editing. **Yi Zeng:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision. **Zhengliang Wang:** Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Resources, Supervision.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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