#Pop Health Lab

SNSF Scientific Exchanges Workshop

Bridging research gaps at the intersection of prevention, low-value care, and healthy ageing: a population-level perspective

September 15th-17th, 2026
University of Fribourg, Switzerland

Swiss National Science Foundation

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Context and funding

The workshop is held on September 15-17, 2026, at the Population Health Laboratory of the University of Fribourg, Switzerland.

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Background

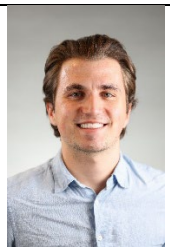
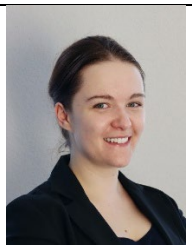
Over the past century, there has been a large rise in the life expectancy of the population resulting from the achievements of socioeconomic development and public health initiatives. As a corollary, there has been a major demographic change where populations have aged rapidly, which has widespread societal implications. When older people age healthily, this benefits them individually as well as society, while also easing the pressure that ageing populations can otherwise place on healthcare and social welfare systems. In this context, **healthy ageing** – defined by World Health Organization (WHO) as "the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age" – has been promoted as a global priority by the United Nations and the WHO in their adoption of the 2021-2030 UN Decade for Healthy Ageing global action plan.

Healthy ageing aims to extend healthy life expectancy with a focus on promoting functional ability. The goal is to enable older adults to live a functional life that they value and continue to make important contributions to society as they age. Correspondingly, functional ability is determined by an individual's environment and intrinsic capacity, that is, the composite of their mental and physical capacities. While the presence of disease or multimorbidity does not preclude people from having high levels of functional ability, the development or progression of chronic diseases across the life course does impact an individual's intrinsic capacity. **Population-level prevention of chronic diseases** is therefore a critical component of promoting healthy ageing, as it can delay or stop declines in intrinsic capacity, which in turn impacts functional ability.

To be effective at promoting healthy ageing, preventive strategies must be **evidence-based**. In population groups that are commonly excluded from trials, such as older and multimorbid adults, considerable uncertainty exists about intervention effectiveness and harms. Correspondingly, several preventive interventions are of **low value** whereby the potential benefits of the intervention do not outweigh its likely harms at a reasonable cost. Furthermore, certain preventive interventions that have a net benefit when used at one stage of the life course, may have a net harm at another life course stage. For example, cancer screening in the oldest old is not recommended within evidence-based guidelines given the low probability that such screening extends healthy life expectancy or improves quality of life in this population. Similarly, pharmacological treatments, such as cardiovascular primary preventive medications, may be of no benefit to patients with limited life expectancy. Further, they may also cause harm, particularly among multimorbid individuals with polypharmacy. **Low-value preventive care** does not contribute to promoting healthy ageing. Rather, to the contrary, it could hinder healthy ageing through causing harms that can directly reduce intrinsic capacity and through opportunity costs of other high-value preventive interventions.

Surprisingly, **low-value care is seldom considered, or included as an important problem in the promotion of healthy ageing**. This scientific workshop, therefore, aims to bridge the research gaps at the intersection of **prevention, low-value care, and healthy ageing at a population level** through bringing together an international group of researchers in these fields. In turn, the knowledge and ideas exchanged and developed at this workshop are ultimately intended to drive cutting edge research for informing evidence-based prevention at the population-level and, as a result, promote healthy ageing.

Participants	
	**Emeritus Prof. Julie Byles AO B.Med PhD FAAHMS AAG Fellow** has had a long career as an academic with the University of Newcastle and the Hunter Medical Research Institute. She was a founding investigator and a director of the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, following the oldest cohort from age 70 to 100+. Her work as an epidemiologist and gerontologist has taken her around the world training clinicians and scientists and advocating for healthy ageing, preventive health care, and aged care. As a clinical epidemiologist, Julie's interests are in risk determination, health assessment, other health care evaluation, and measurement of health outcomes. As a Gerontologist her interests in ageing include the role of health and long-term care services, preventive activities, and treatments in maintaining quality of life for older people Email: julie.byles@newcastle.edu.au)
	**Prof. Arnaud Chiolero, MD, PhD** is an epidemiologist and public health physician. He is Professor of Population Health at the University of Fribourg, adjunct professor at McGill University, and director of the Population Health Laboratory. He also co-directs the Swiss School of Public Health. Trained in medicine (Lausanne) and epidemiology (Erasmus University Rotterdam, McGill), his research focuses on life-course epidemiology of chronic diseases, including cancer, and public health surveillance. Email: arnaud.chiolero@unifr.ch
	**PD Stéphane Cullati, PhD** is a sociologist and life course epidemiologist. He serves as Senior Lecturer in Epidemiology and Public Health at the University of Fribourg and Deputy Director of the Population Health Laboratory (#PopHealthLab). He trained in social sciences, philosophy and sociology (Universities of Lausanne, Geneva and Grenoble), in life course research (Swiss Centre of Expertise in Life Course Research LIVES) and in epidemiology (UCL). His research explores the intersection of health and society with a life course approach, specifically regarding the social determinants of health and social policies, notably sex and gender in differences in health, with a focus on women's health, healthy ageing, and prevention of chronic diseases. Email: stephane.cullati@unifr.ch
	**Emma Grundtvig Gram, PhD** is a public health researcher at the Centre of General Practice, University of Copenhagen. Her research focuses on overdiagnosis, cancer screening programmes, and health communication, with particular attention to the psychosocial and societal harms of screening and medical overuse. Emma is also a member of the scientific committee and the chair of the early-mid-career researchers of Preventing Overdiagnosis. Email: emma.gram@sund.ku.dk
	**Prof. Nicolas Rodondi, MD, MAS** is Director of the Institute of Primary Health Care (BIHAM) at the University of Bern and the Chief Physician in the Department of General Internal Medicine at the Inselspital (Bern University Hospital). He is also a member of the Research Council Committee of the Swiss National Science Foundation and president of the association "smarter medicine/Choosing Wisely Switzerland", which aims to improve

	quality of care by better taking patients' needs into account, in particular by limiting care that provides no benefit to patients, in order to maintain a sustainable healthcare system. Prof. Rodondi focuses on patient-centred clinical research in the field of cardiovascular risk factors (particularly cholesterol) and multimorbid patients with polypharmacy. Email: nicolas.rodondi@insel.ch
	**Saman Khalatbari-Soltani, PhD** is a social epidemiologist and Senior Lecturer at the Sydney School of Public Health and the Prevention Research Collaboration. Saman is a Deputy Head of the International Longevity Centre – Australia (ILC-Australia) and a member of the Sydney Health Partners Geriatric Medicine Leadership Team. She is also Director of the Population Health Theme of the Medical Degree Program at the University of Sydney. Trained in epidemiology at the University of Lausanne and the University of Cambridge, her work focuses on inequities in health and healthy ageing across the life course, as well as on advancing methods in social and life course epidemiology. Email: saman.khalatbarisoltani@sydney.edu.au
	**Frerik Smit, MPH, MA** is a PhD candidate and research assistant at the Population Health Laboratory of the University of Fribourg and a Graduate Research Trainee in the Department of Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Occupational Health at McGill University. He holds degrees in economics and politics (Queen Mary University of London), community development and planning (Clark University), and public health (University of Sydney). His PhD examines low-value cancer screening, focusing namely on its prevalence in Switzerland and Europe, and on its patterning among older adults for whom screening is often not recommended. Email: frerik.smit@unifr.ch
	**Cornelia Wagner, PhD** is a postdoctoral researcher at the *#PopHealthLab*. She holds a BSc in Bioresource Sciences from the University of Tsukuba (Japan), a MSc in Medical Anthropology from University College London (United Kingdom), as well as a PhD in Medical Sciences from the University of Fribourg (Switzerland). Her current research integrates complexity perspectives with public health methods to examine how preventive healthcare systems shape differential care pathways over time. Email: cornelia.wagner@unifr.ch

Themes and aims

Theme 1: Low-value prevention *(lead: Arnaud Chiolero and Frerik Smit)*

Aim 1: Establish a definition of low-value preventive care.
Low-value care is relatively well defined, but there is yet to be a formally established definition of low-value preventive care. While low-value preventive care is inherently connected to low-value care, having a distinct definition is important as the types of interventions, the target populations for interventions, and the standard of needed evidence differs for preventive and curative care. The current absence of an established definition thereby hinders communication, common understanding, collaboration, and the advancement of research on low-value preventive care.

Theme 2: Linking low-value care to healthy ageing *(lead: Saman Khalatbari-Soltani and Frerik Smit)*

Aim 2: Develop a conceptual understanding of how de-implementing low-value care can help promote healthy ageing.
Having a formal conceptual understanding for how de-implementing low-value care is important to promote healthy ageing is foundational to bridging research gaps at the intersection of prevention, low-value care, and healthy ageing.
Aim 3: Identify research priorities at the intersection of prevention, low-value care, and healthy ageing at a population level.
Identifying research priorities is important to inspire and encourage consequential research in this domain.

Program Day 1 (Tuesday September 15th, 2026) – Understanding prevention, healthy ageing, and low-value care **Location: #PopHealthLab, room 247, University of Fribourg**			
Time	**Session topic**	**Speakers**	**Session details**
09:30 – 10:00	Welcome with coffee	Frerik Smit, Arnaud Chiolero, Saman Khalatbari-Soltani	Introduction to workshop and its objectives *(FS, AC, SKS; 10min)* Introduction of workshop participants and their expectations *(all; 20min)*
10:00 – 11:15	Understanding prevention at a population level	Arnaud Chiolero, Cornelia Wagner, Stéphane Cullati ***Moderator:*** *Frerik Smit*	What is prevention? Where is the evidence? *(AC; 20min)* Preventive practices across the life course *(CW/SC; 20min)* Secondary prevention from a systems perspective *(CW; 15min)* Q&A and discussion *(all; 20min)*
11:15 – 11:30	Coffee break		
11:30 – 12:30	Understanding healthy ageing	Saman Khalatbari-Soltani, Julie Byles ***Moderator:*** *Arnaud Chiolero*	The concept of healthy ageing *(SKS; 20min)* Long tail of prevention in older age *(JB; 20min)* Q&A and discussion *(all; 20min)*
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch in Room 247		
13:30 – 14:30	Understanding low-value care	Frerik Smit, Arnaud Chiolero ***Moderator:*** *Saman Khalatbari-Soltani*	Low-value care: why it matters *(FS/AC; 30min)* Mapping definitions of low-value care (*FS; 10min*) Q&A and discussion *(all; 20min)*
14:30 – 15:30	Brainstorming / discussion section	***Moderator:*** *Frerik Smit*	How are prevention, healthy ageing, and low-value care connected? *(all; 1hr)*
15:30 – 15:45	Coffee break		
15:45 – 16:45	Data landscape	Sama Khalatbari-Soltani, Frerik Smit ***Moderator:*** *Arnaud Chiolero*	Healthy Ageing Toolkit *(SKS; 25min)* Challenges in using health survey and routine health data for research on low-value care *(FS; 15min)* Q&A and discussion *(all; 20min)*

Program Day 2 (Wednesday September 16th, 2026) – Focus on theme 1: low-value preventive care **Location: Hôtel Romantik de l'Ours, Sugiez (train from Fribourg to Sugiez)**			
Time	**Session topic**	**Speakers**	**Session details**
10:00 – 10:30	First case study of low-value preventive care (cancer screening)	Frerik Smit ***Moderator**: Arnaud Chiolero*	What is low-value cancer screening? *(FS; 20min)* Q&A and discussion *(all; 10min)*
10:30 – 11:00	Second case study of low-value preventive care (inappropriate medications)	Julie Byles ***Moderator:** Frerik Smit*	Polypharmacy and the inappropriate use of medications in older adults *(Julie Byles; 20min)* Q&A and discussion *(all; 10min)*
11:00 – 11:15	Coffee break		
11:15 – 12:15	Brainstorming session	***Moderators:** Frerik Smit, Arnaud Chiolero*	Developing a definition of low-value preventive care *(all; 1hr)*
12:15 – 14:00	Lunch		
14:00 – 15:10	De-implementing low-value preventive care	Nicolas Rodondi, Emma Grundtvig Gram ***Moderator:** Saman Khalatbari-Soltani*	Choosing wisely / smarter medicine *(Nicolas Rodondi; 20min)* Older women's experiences of breast cancer screening discontinuation (*Emma Grundtvig Gram; 20min*) Q&A and discussion *(all; 30min)*
15:10 – 15:30	Coffee break		
15:30 – 16:30	Planning session	***Moderators:** Frerik Smit, Arnaud Chiolero*	Planning Theme 1 paper: - Defining low-value preventive care - Separating low-value preventive care from low-value curative care - The importance of low-value preventive care

Program Day 3 (Thursday September 17th, 2026) – Focus on theme 2: Linking low-value care to healthy ageing **Location: #PopHealthLab, room 247, University of Fribourg**			
Time	**Session topic**	**Speakers**	**Session details**
09:30 – 10:00	Disease definitions	Katy JL Bell *(remote talk)* ***Moderator:*** *Arnaud Chiolero*	The consequences of widening disease definitions *(remote talk: KJLB; 20min)* Q&A and discussion *(all; 10min)*
10:00 – 10:30	The harms of low-value care	Emma Grundtvig Gram ***Moderator:*** *Arnaud Chiolero*	A taxonomy for the harms of too much medicine (*EGG; 20min*) Q&A and discussion *(all; 10min)*
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee break		
10:45 – 11:30	Intrinsic capacity	Saman Khalatbari-Soltani, Julie Byles ***Moderator:*** *Arnaud Chiolero*	Measuring intrinsic capacity and healthy ageing: challenges and opportunities *(SKS/JB; 30min)* Q&A and discussion *(all; 15min)*
11:30 – 12:15	Brainstorming session	***Moderators:*** *Saman Khalatbari-Soltani, Julie Byles*	To what extent has the function-focused definition of healthy ageing shifted too far away from considerations of disease *(all; 45min)*?
12:15 – 13:15	Lunch in room 247		
13:15 – 14:15	Brainstorming session	***Moderators:*** *Frerik Smit, Julie Byles, Saman Khalatbari-Soltani*	Linking low-value care to the intrinsic capacity domains of healthy ageing *(all; 1hr)*
14:15 – 14:30	Coffee break		
14:30 – 15:30	Planning session	***Moderators:*** *Frerik Smit, Saman Khalatbari-Soltani*	Planning theme 2 paper *(all)*: - Framing the de-implementation of low-value care as an important component of promoting healthy ageing - Research gaps and research priorities
15:30 – 15:45	Planning next steps for planned workshop outcomes	***Moderator:*** *Frerik Smit*	Online knowledge hub *(all; 15min)* Peer-reviewed journal articles *(all; 15min)* National and international conference abstract(s) *(all; 15min)*

15:45 – 16:00	Closing	Frerik Smit, Arnaud Chiolero, Saman Khalatbari-Soltani	Closing remarks *(FS/AC/SKS; 15min)*
17:00 – 18:30	Guided walking tour of Fribourg		Tour starts at the Place Georges-Python
19:00 – late	Dinner		Restaurant Aigle-Noir (Rue des Alpes 10, 1700 Fribourg)

Expected outcomes of the workshop

1. Online knowledge hub

We will create an online knowledge hub summarising the workshop and its key takeaways. It will also compile workshop presentation slides, list out a bibliography of notable literature in the field, and provide links to key resources for researchers and practitioners. This knowledge hub will be published within one month of the completion of the workshop on the website of the #PopHalthLab (https://projects.unifr.ch/pophealthlab/) and be promoted through social media channels (LinkedIn, Bluesky, X) of the workshop organisers and active participants. In turn, the success of the workshop will partly be evaluated based on the knowledge hub's engagement.

2. Peer-reviewed journal articles

Building on the ideas exchanged and developed throughout the workshop, we will plan out two journal articles. The first article will be centred around theme 1 and propose a formal definition of low-value preventive care (workshop aim 1) and emphasise the importance of distinguishing between low-value preventive and curative care. The second article will be centred around theme 2 outline why and how de-implementing low-value care is an important aspect of promoting healthy ageing at a population level (workshop aim 2) and set forth research priorities at the intersection of prevention, low-value care, and healthy ageing (workshop aim 3). Drafts of both articles will be produced within three months of the completion of the workshop (led by FS and AC for theme 1, and FS and SKS for theme 2) and revised with input from all active workshop participants. The final version of these articles will be submitted to peer-reviewed academic journals within six months of the workshop completion date.

3. National and international conference presentation(s)

We will identify national and international conference(s) that would be suitable and worthwhile platforms to present a summary of the workshop and its outcomes. Accordingly, conference abstract(s) will be drafted after the workshop by FS and AC, and finalised following feedback from all active workshop participants. The abstract(s) will subsequently be submitted to the identified conference(s) with the timeframe determined according to the abstract submission deadlines of the selected conference(s). Part of the success of the workshop will therefore be assessed based on whether these abstract(s) are accepted in the conference program(s).

Relevant literature

Theme 1: Low-value preventive care

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Theme 2: Linking low-value care to healthy ageing

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