

THE TREVISO LONGEVA (TRELONG) STUDY: A BIOMEDICAL, DEMOGRAPHIC,  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INVESTIGATION ON PEOPLE 70 YEARS AND OVER  
IN A TYPICAL TOWN OF NORTH-EAST OF ITALY

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#### SUMMARY

Longevity is a complex process resulting from genetic and environmental factors, as well as their interaction. These factors are poorly understood, and the comparison among health status, socio-economics, demographic and other characteristics of the elderly people can help in understanding these complex interactions. Such an interdisciplinary approach is necessary to allow an appropriate evaluation of longevity. Here we report the methodology and the first results of a representative study performed in 2003-2004 on people of 70 years and over, living in a typical town of North-East of Italy. In the research we collected biomedical, demographic, socio-economic and quality of life (QoL) data.

Keywords: disability of elderly, pathologies of elderly, pharmacology in elderly, mortality, demography of aging, economy in late life, quality of life

#### INTRODUCTION

A progressive increase of life expectancy has been occurring in economic-developed countries since about the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century. While in 1971, the elderly Europeans represented 15% in the total population, this percentage grew to 20% in 2000 and it is estimated to reach 35% by 2050. In 2000, Italy and Greece had more people over 60 than other countries in Europe. (Mirkin and Weinberg, 2001). Therefore, the Italian population is one of the oldest in the world due to declining fertility rates and increased survival rates of the elderly. Improved nutrition, health services, medical care and employment, are thought to have contributed to this demographic phenomenon (Golini et al., 1997). By the year 2040, Italians over 60 years will be 40% and those over 80 years 11% of the population

(ISTAT, 1997). This remarkable demographic phenomenon generates social and economic changes requiring careful reconsiderations in institutional policies (Breviglieri, 1996; Casazza, 2002; Clerici, 2002).

Health, social and economical conditions of the elderly and of the oldest old, have been addressed by a few studies (CNR, 1995; Samuelsson et al., 1997; Evert et al., 2003; Landi et al., 2005). In this paper, we present the protocol and the first results of the “Treviso Longeva Study”, a targeted health research project, supported by the Veneto Region, Treviso Municipality and Province, Cassamarca Foundation and other organizations. The study was implemented by ARGel, an interdisciplinary geriatric research association, through the collection of biological, medical, social, economic, demographic and QoL data in about 670 subjects over 70 years (Gallucci, 2002, 2004).

The city of Treviso, located in the region of Veneto in the North-Eastern part of the country was chosen due to its highest longevity in women (life expectancy at birth is 83.4 years in 1998-2000) and above national averages of live expectancy at birth for men (76.4 years in 1998-2000) (National Institute of Statistics: [www.istat.it](http://www.istat.it); Caselli and Lipsi, 2002). The aim of this study was to collect demographic, biomedical, economic and QoL variables for 70 years and over, as well as for the oldest old, in a well-defined town of North-Eastern Italy; to determine differences from similar studies performed in other areas with different geographical, economical and genetic characteristics.