

## INTERNATIONAL SELF-CARE DAY

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The 24th of July 2013 was International Self-Care Day, with the theme 'Self-Care is for Life'. This is the third year that July 24th has been so designated, and the event has grown from the 2011 pilot in Beijing and the 2012 day in Shanghai, to now involve many areas of Greater China and other countries including Vietnam, Indonesia, Myanmar and Nigeria. Of course annual events on the theme of self-care already take place on a national basis around the world: for example the UK's Self-Care Week will take place from 18th – 24th November. But the international flavour of a designated day may help to address a broader purpose.

Self-care is a very broad concept. The Editorial Board of *SelfCare* took considerable care to craft a statement of the scope of the journal (see the tab 'About Us' on this website) that was wide enough to encompass all of the areas of academic endeavour that self-care might touch – this was not an easy task. Self-care means different things to different people: to the person with a headache it might mean a buying a tablet, but to the person with a chronic illness it can mean every element of self-management that takes place outside the doctor's office. When national public bodies talk about self-care they may also have different themes in mind: from the easing of pressure on expensive health care resources, to preventative public health measures aimed at smoking cessation and curbing excess alcohol consumption. However, in the broadest sense of the term, self-care is a philosophy that transcends national boundaries and the healthcare systems which they contain.

The majority of premature deaths in the 21st century will result from non-communicable diseases (such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes) which have a strong link to lifestyle. It will simply not be possible to meet the enormous challenge that the growth of these illnesses will impose on the world's population and economy without dealing with the lifestyle factors which contribute so much to their causation. In this context 'self-care' means engaging people to be active participants, with shared responsibility for maintaining their health and wellbeing. Doing this will need a holistic approach that will almost certainly take place outside conventional healthcare systems. Public policy, including education, transport and building design, will need to be part of the solution and there will be many opportunities to share best practice internationally. International Self-Care Day has the potential to act as a focus for those concepts which transcend national priorities.

It is perhaps fitting that International Self-Care Day should have its roots in China. Self-care is a philosophy that may have particular resonance in a culture where traditional remedies and practices have been so important. As the world's most populous nation China has much to gain from a mass movement that addresses disease prevention from the starting point of maintaining wellbeing through lifestyle; but self-care should be a truly international priority. *SelfCare* looks forward to the expansion of International Self-Care Day, and the 'worldview' of the role of self-care that it may help to foster.

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