

Hello, and welcome to As It Is! ... your daily magazine show from VOA Learning English.

I'm June Simms.

Today, we talk about how populations around the world are growing older.

And we look at what some societies are doing to deal with their aging citizens.

Special Homes Let Elderly Live Near Loved Ones

In the United States, more and more families have turned to assisted living centers to care for their aging parents. But, as we hear from Faith Lapidus, there may be an even better idea -- one that provides a safe environment for older adults while keeping them close to loved ones.

In a quiet neighborhood near Washington, DC, two homes sit within several meters of each other. The larger house belongs to Soc Page and her family. Behind it is a small home where her mother, Viola Baez, lives. Miss Baez's home is a MEDCottage. These structures are built to meet the medical and safety needs of an older person. Soc Page says it was the best place for her mother.

“She absolutely refuses to even consider a nursing home. That was completely out of the question. And my home is just not safe for her. So this is an alternative. She’s here, but she has her own space. It’s set up for her, it’s safe for her and it’s not a nursing home. We are actually her primary caretakers.”

The MEDCottage is small -- just 28 square meters. But it has separate areas for living and bathing. There is even space for medical equipment.

There are also safety lights on the floor so Viola Baez can safely walk to the bathroom at night. The builder included a special soft padding under the floor so older adults will not break a bone if they fall. The bathroom has a walk-in shower and hand railings. From her own house, Soc Page can use cameras and intercom equipment to see and hear her mother.

Ken Dupin started N2Care, the company that builds the small homes. He wanted to help families stay together.

“In virtually every other culture in the world they would celebrate that. They would see that as a privilege. But for whatever reason in the culture that I live in, we have resistance to that. And that’s my mission, is to change that.”

MEDCottages are built in Martinsville, Virginia. They are then transported and set up on the homeowner’s property. For Ken Dupin, each sale is meaningful.

“If I have a purpose for the rest of my life, it is somehow challenging and motivating people to accept this responsibility, and it’s funny in that it’s its own reward.”

Soc Page says having her mother nearby is the natural order of things.

Viola Baez could not agree more.

“I have no complaints at all. I’m very happy.”

Ken Dupin has received more than 3,000 requests for information about MEDCottages . He hopes he can make many other families as happy in the homes as this one. I’m Faith Lapidus.

I’m June Simms with As It Is on the Voice of America.

Like the United States, China is also dealing with the issue of caring for its aging population. Christopher Cruise has more.

New Law Requires Adult Children to Visit Aging Parents

The elderly population in China is predicted to more than double in the next forty years. Yet, the country’s one child policy has left a shortage of children to care for the growing elderly population.

This has become an even bigger problem as China's economy continues its quick growth. More and more young people are leaving their parents behind as they move to cities for better jobs.

Now a new law in the country will let elderly parents who feel neglected by their children take them to court. China passed the law in December.

The law requires that adult children visit their aging parents regularly. It does not say how often these visits must take place, but it warns that failure to visit often enough could result in court action.

The new law follows increasing reports of elderly parents being abandoned or ignored by their children. I'm Christopher Cruise.

Research Finds That Heart Disease is Nothing New

Finally on As It Is, there is new evidence related to hardening of the arteries, or atherosclerosis. The condition is often described as a lifestyle disease. It has been linked to smoking, poor diet, and a lack of exercise. Now, a team of scientists in the United States has evidence that it has been a problem for thousands of years.

The scientists examined CT, or “cat”, images of 137 mummies for signs of atherosclerosis. Randall Thompson is with the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He says he and the other researchers found definite or probable evidence of the condition in about one-third of the mummies.

“We’ve concluded that this disease is inherent to human aging ... and that it’s not particularly characteristic of any diet or lifestyle.”

The human remains were mostly from ancient Egypt and Peru. A small number came from the United States. They came from Utah and the Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska.

The Aleutian mummies were all from a 19th century group of hunter-gatherers. Yet three of the five bodies showed signs of hardening of the arteries.

“Now, one of the Aleutians who had this disease would have had a traditional lifestyle like her people had had for a very long time - hunting from kayaks and so forth. And she had very extensive coronary calcifications, the kind of calcifications we see in our modern patients, the patients that need bypass surgery.”

This goes against the belief that atherosclerosis, and heart disease in general, is related to the lack of exercise among the people of today.

The scientists reported their findings at a meeting of the American College of Cardiology in San Francisco. The study was published in the journal The Lancet.

That's As It Is for today. I'm June Simms. Thanks for joining us.

Stay tuned for VOA world news at the beginning of every hour Universal Time.

And remember, we want to hear about the issues and ideas that matter to you, in your world, As It Is.

Email your questions or comments to learningenglish@voanews.com.

Have a great evening!