
Keynote Presentation: Promoting full citizenship through investment in child health and wellbeing

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Children are neither little adults or marooned in a lifelong childhood. They face unique opportunities and risks in their passage to full citizenship. The experience of childhood is never static and moves with the ebb and flow of social and family life which in turn is influenced by changing national and international circumstances. A growing body of evidence points to the lifelong influences of childhood experiences on the health, wellbeing and effective functioning of adults, and the consequences of the dynamic interplay of these experiences with our biological makeup. Healthy ageing begins in utero, if not earlier. The health care system is only one of the players needed to promote better child health and wellbeing outcomes. Investing in effective strategies that promote early childhood health and wellbeing is a logical priority for a nation that confronts the challenge of maximising its human and social capital to ensure its competitiveness on the global stage.