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Editorial

From Lifestyle to Performance in Aging Research

For decades, aging research has excelled at describing decline while struggling to prevent it. We have become extraordinarily precise in measuring endpoints — diagnoses, stages, thresholds — yet remarkably limited in our ability to monitor trajectories, detect early drift, or guide recovery. The result is a literature rich in explanation but poor in navigation.

This is the gap the *Journal of Aging Research & Lifestyle* intends to occupy.

JarLIFE was not founded to become another repository of aging studies. Its ambition is more specific and more demanding: to reframe aging as a **performance problem**, not merely a health outcome. Performance, in this context, refers to how cognitive, behavioral, and functional systems operate over time — how they adapt, compensate, degrade, and sometimes recover under real-world conditions.

This reframing is not semantic. It is operational.

Traditional models of aging research prioritize pathology and risk, often treating lifestyle, behavior, and environment as confounders to be adjusted away. A performance-based framework instead treats these factors as **continuous system inputs** — variables that shape trajectories long before clinical thresholds are crossed. Sleep, nutrition, physical activity, stress exposure, social engagement, and environmental load are not adjuncts to aging biology; they are among its primary control parameters.

From this perspective, aging is neither binary nor inevitable. It is a time-dependent process marked by early signals, quiet inflections, and modifiable paths. The dominance of cross-sectional designs and threshold-based reporting is reinforced by publication norms that privilege between-group significance over within-individual dynamics. Longitudinal signals are fragmented. Negative results, boundary conditions, and failed generalizations are systematically undervalued.

Much of contemporary aging research is structured around between-person mean differences, threshold-based classifications, and cross-sectional inference. These designs are analytically convenient, but they compress time-dependent intra-individual variance into residual error. In doing so, biologically meaningful dynamics—early drift, instability, compensatory fluctuation, and recovery—are often obscured rather than modeled. Variability within individuals is not merely statistical noise; it often reflects underlying system dynamics. If aging is fundamentally a trajectory, then inferential frameworks must be capable of representing trajectories rather than collapsing them into endpoints.

Representing trajectories requires repeated-measures designs, explicit modeling of intra-individual variance, time-dependent covariate structures, and attention to recovery and instability patterns as primary outcomes. Without these elements, trajectory is inferred rather than observed. The distinction is not semantic; it is structural.

JarLIFE intends to correct this imbalance.

Beginning in 2026, the journal will actively prioritize contributions that advance performance-based aging science, including:

(1) conceptual frameworks that clarify how performance should be defined and measured;
(2) longitudinal signal discovery studies that illuminate early drift and resilience;
(3) translational designs that bridge measurement to action; and
(4) editorials that take explicit positions and invite principled disagreement.

Central to this vision is the concept of a *Brain Watch* — not as a product or a device, but as an organizing question. What would it mean to monitor brain performance with the same continuity, sensitivity, and practical relevance that we apply to other complex systems? What signals would matter? What failures would become preventable? What recoveries would become visible?

Answering these questions requires contributions from across disciplines: clinical medicine, neuroscience, geroscience, engineering, data science, public health, and the social sciences. JarLIFE seeks to become the meeting ground where these perspectives converge — not in abstraction, but in service of operational insight.

This vision also redefines the role of the editorial board. Board members are not passive reviewers of submissions; they are co-architects of a new intellectual terrain. Their task is to help identify the questions that do not yet fit comfortably within existing journals — and to make room for them here.

If JarLIFE succeeds, it will not look like a traditional academic journal. It will evolve continuously, challenge its own assumptions, and risk being wrong in public. That risk is not a liability. It is the cost of relevance.

Aging is not a diagnosis.

It is a trajectory.

If research remains organized around diagnoses, intervention will remain late.

JarLIFE exists to help chart the trajectory before it hardens into a label.

Declaration of competing interests

Dr. Khachaturian is an officer and director of the Campaign to Prevent AD (PAD 20/20); officer, director, and employee of Khachaturian and Associates; founding executive editor of *Alzheimer & Dementia, The Journal of the Alzheimer Association* (retired); founding executive editor

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