Informal Discussion Transcript
Concurrent Session 1A: Data Sources and Analysis

Presented at the Living to 100 Symposium
Orlando, Fla.
January 4–6, 2017

Session 1A: Data Sources and Analysis Q&A only

LARRY PINZUR: Yes. Larry Pinzur from Aon Hewitt. I think this is a question for Dr. Andreev mostly. I thought I saw online studies done by the University of Washington that actually showed mortality rates, not just for age 80 and over, but actually they were looking at life expectancies and the change over time, and I believe it was county-by-county basis. I just want to know how good is that data? Do we know what the University of Washington is doing? And how does it differ from some of the analysis and some of the data sources that you might be using? So first question is: Am I correct in remembering that the University of Washington is doing that sort of research?

DR. KIRILL ANDREEV: Yes, I'm familiar with the research they are doing. They estimate life expectancy at birth by U.S. counties. Old-age mortality for U.S. counties cannot be reliably estimated directly from the data because of small population and death counts at older ages. Moreover, Ezzati and colleagues estimate life expectancy at age 85 by a reciprocal of an open-ended death rate, a death rate at ages 85 and over. This approach implies that population above age 85 is stationary, and this assumption is clearly violated for the United States. We used a completely different approach to estimate death rates at older ages for the U.S. states—the approach that produces correct results if data quality can be accepted as reasonably good.

LARRY PINZUR: But one would think you could aggregate some of the statistics on a county-wide basis from the University of Washington and compare it to the types of changes that you might be seeing. I was just wondering if that was done, because I know from looking at the types of graphs and illustrations that they have on their website at least, they're showing the highest levels of mortality in the exact same spots that you've shown—the deep south, reaching up to Appalachia—and the lowest mortality rates on the coasts. So I'm just curious. I just wanted to know whether there's been any comparison of the data sets and just an overall, sort of a double-check on the work that you're doing.

DR. KIRILL ANDREEV: I agree that the pattern looks similar. They looked at life expectancy at birth, and we looked at life expectancy at age 80. This is kind of reassuring that they get the similar results; these two measures of mortality are correlated.

LARRY PINZUR: Thank you.

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KAI KAUFHOLD: So are there any more questions? Then please join me in thanking the presenters. [*Applause*] And this session's adjourned. Thank you.