

Expanding lifespan is a threat to life

What used to be a dream or a science fiction feature may one day become reality. Living eternally or at least expanding lifespan is within reach thanks to medical progress. But would it be a viable idea?

Life expectancy has kept increasing, at least for middle and upper classes. Global average life expectancy rose by 5 years between 2000 and 2015, the fastest increase since the 1960s. 71.4 years was the average life expectancy of the global population in 2015 (73.8 years for females and 69.1 years for males), ranging from 60.0 years in Africa to 76.8 years in Europe. Average life expectancy is set to increase in many countries by 2030—and will exceed 90 years in South Korea: a baby girl born in South Korea in 2030 will expect to live 90.8 years. Life expectancy at birth for South Korean men will be 84.1 years.

Reverse engineering may help increase longevity by finding out why centenarians are living longer and applying their recipes to our lives. Simpler medical improvements could help cure respiratory infections which are among the leading causes of death for all income groups.

Living longer presents obvious benefits. We can do more things like travelling, learning, reading or discovering other cultures. We could become really good at things thanks to more practice and experience than normally humanly possible. We could see the family grow up and share memories and knowledge of the past. We could benefit from the latest developments and inventions such as medical treatments for age-related diseases, sciences and technology. We could take our time and feel less stressed.

The youngest could make the most of the transmission of information and culture from experienced, talented and knowledgeable people. As a result, the level of knowledge could rise and more people could take advantage of progress.

Yet, expanding lifespan would put a strain on resources. Overpopulation reduces the amount of space and the quantity of resources for all. More wars can appear owing to conflicts between countries over borders and supplies.

Society may become more violent as well: the gap between the haves and the have-nots will widen as only the wealthiest could afford to extend their lives. People would live in two-tier societies.

Research to expand life expectancy is very costly and some people may argue that it would be more sensible to improve current lives rather than mess with nature. What is the worth of living longer if we do not live better? Finding remedies to current diseases, poverty and tensions should be a priority.

Living longer may also make life less valuable and worthwhile. People may feel bored if they do not do meaningful activities.

Finally, expanding lifespan meets personal interests rather than public good. As there are more people to sustain, there will be less work, less revenue and more people to support financially for the community. Thus, more people will live in poverty.

Living longer may symbolise a breakthrough and a goal to reach for scientists but it may backfire and cause more havoc than benefits.

506 words

Questions

- Would we appreciate life the same way if we could live longer or eternally?
- Would everyone benefit from life expansion?
- Would an immortal be able to cope with the accumulated memories?
- Does living longer necessarily mean being happier?
- What would be more fearful than death and disease?

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VOCABULARY: immortality	FACTS AND FIGURES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-aging drug : médicament anti-vieillessement • As long as possible : le plus longtemps possible • Breakthrough : grande invention • Centenarian : centenaire • Healthspan = years in which you are free of frailty or disease • Indefinitely : indéfiniment • Lifespan = life expectancy : espérance de vie • Overpopulated = overcrowded : bondé • Supplies = resources • Threshold : seuil • To bereave the loss : pleurer la perte • To devalue = depreciate : dévaloriser • To extend = expand = lengthen : allonger • To get bored : s'ennuyer • To go beyond : dépasser • To heal = cure diseases : soigner des maladies • To live forever : vivre éternellement • To lose a relative : perdre un parent • To mess with nature : chambouler la nature • To put a strain on = put pressure on : mettre la pression sur • To reinvigorate : redynamiser • To sustain : maintenir, soutenir • Two-tier society : société à deux vitesses • Unavoidable : inévitable • Unending =endless : sans fin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world's oldest man has been named as Indonesian Mbah Gotho, who is 145 years old (he was born in 1870). • 71.4 years was the average life expectancy of the global population in 2015 (73.8 years for females and 69.1 years for males), ranging from 60.0 years in Africa to 76.8 years in Europe. • Women live longer than men all around the world. The gap in life expectancy between the sexes was 4.5 years in 1990 and had remained almost the same by 2015 (4.6). • Global average life expectancy rose by 5 years between 2000 and 2015, the fastest increase since the 1960s. • Reverse engineering may help increase longevity by finding out why centenarians are living longer and applying their recipes to our lives. • 52% of deaths in low-income countries are caused by communicable diseases, maternal causes, conditions arising during pregnancy and childbirth, and nutritional deficiencies (7% of deaths in high-income countries). Respiratory infections are among the leading causes of death for all income groups. • <i>"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted"</i> (The Bible).