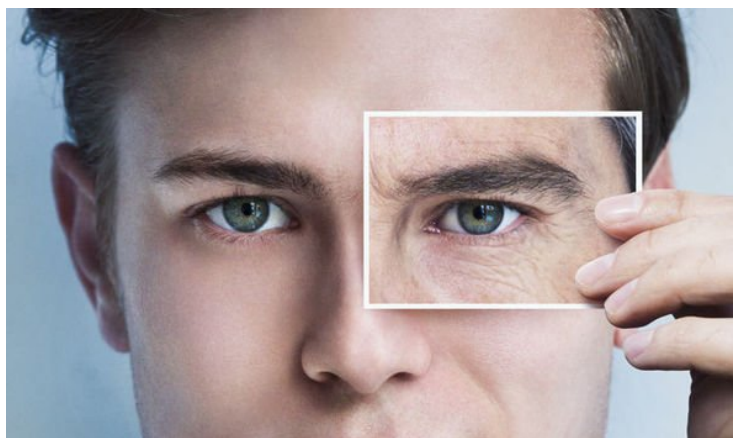


Experts seek quality & not quantity as modern science looks to improve health & life span

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A discussion on ageing by Economist Impact



Healthcare has taken massive strides in a matter of two years, evolving and changing distinctly. As efforts against COVID-19 continue to progress, other aspects of healthcare have also been brought under sharp scrutiny. With the profound scientific development that has taken place during the crisis, it is now time to look beyond and foster the positive changes.

From the 22nd-25th November, 2021, Economist Impact organised its second Future of Healthcare Week Asia, virtually, where 3,000+ healthcare leaders explored how to navigate the opportunities and challenges around innovation, accessibility, efficiency, sustainability and the inevitable acceleration of digital healthcare catalysed by the pandemic.

On 24th November, 2021, in an interesting discussion on “In conversation: The World if...we achieved life extension and immortality”, experts conversed about a futuristic world where ageing may be defeated. They deliberated on critical questions such as- “Have we got it all long for millennia believing that life is naturally time-bound and ageing and death is inevitable? Is it our human folly that we treat diseases of old age and silos one-by-one as if they are all separate; cancer, cardiovascular diseases, dementia to name a few without really addressing the underlying causes, ageing itself? What if healthy life could be extended, even indefinitely?

Dr Nir Barzilai, Director, Institute for ageing Research, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, US spoke on the scientific research going on in the ageing field. “In order to be a hallmark of ageing, you have to show that things are changing with age and if you fix it in models by drugs or genetic ways then you get an increasing life span in animals. The important thing is our biotech has been developed to choose and target hallmarks. The thing about hallmarks is that if you target one, you affect the others, so you don't have to do everything. We want to prevent ageing and thus prevent the diseases”, he said.

On the other hand, **David Sinclair, Professor of genetics and co-director, Paul F. Glenn Center for the biology of ageing research, Harvard Medical School, US** spoke on the practicality of ageing research. “We scientists have been working on longevity for some time now. Our goal is not to keep people older for longer, it's to keep the entire body younger for longer. What we want to do is make ageing a preventable disease. It is not acceptable to be sick and frail at any age. The goal is to approach medicine from a different angle and get healthier in ways that we could not imagined until recently,” he

said.

Talking about the social aspects of life extension, **Janice Chia, Founder and Managing Director, Ageing Asia, Singapore**, said, "We talk a lot about health span and life span but what about social span and how much can we extend those positive years of purpose when we are engaging in work and play or things that we like. Life is now going to become a marathon whether it is 115 years or beyond but we are running like 100m sprinters in the first 10-20 years of our careers and I think that will have to change. We will change education, the way we are teaching in schools and maybe there will be more time for play in the earlier years and not race them into making up their minds."

Ageing is now being considered a treatable, even preventable condition which is at the heart of improving the human condition with extension of life span and also health span. It is not simply about living longer but living well enough that life may be experienced and enjoyed longer. Modern science has granted us an unimaginable average life span of almost 115 years with antibiotics and surgeries but it came with the baggage of invincible diseases like cancer and Alzheimer's. So the current goal is to better the general health condition of people and not simply add years.