



{ SOCIETY SAYS SO }

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PRODUCTIVE Ageing

IN the past few decades, the average human life expectancy has increased globally. Today, this figure stands at 83 years, which is dramatically higher than the 38-year expectancy of a century ago. A life expectancy of 100 years is not such a distant target any more. When we discuss longevity and anti-ageing, we need to understand these as two separate concepts, even though they are often considered together, says Dr Deepak Chaturvedi, physician, endocrinologist, diabetologist, antiageing specialist and obesity consultant AMAAYA Clinic, Mumbai and Anjana Multispeciality Clinic. He is also the Mumbai President of Antiageing Medicine And Research (AMAR).

LONGEVITY

Longevity is a direct increase in the life span of an individual. It is simply determined by the age of the individual. So, how has society managed to increase its life expectancy or longevity? Globally, several infectious diseases, real killers of their time, have been eradicated. These include small pox, polio and plagues. Along with controlling these killer diseases, medical technology and knowledge has advanced phenomenally over the past few decades. Many countries have national health programmes and social security systems that provide healthcare assistance to their citizens. Immunisation programmes have also contributed to improved life expectancy. Access to primary healthcare is easier, something that is also supported by the generally improving socio-economic status of countries across the world. Media campaigns about hygiene, cleanliness and healthcare have all changed the way society views and deals with medical issues.

There are four preventive areas dealing with diseases and ill-health.

These are primordial, primary, secondary and tertiary prevention methods.

- Primordial prevention involves the avoidance of risk factors and healthy living habits. Factors like good sanitation, clean environment and the practice of healthy habits all apply here.
- Primary prevention involves the avoidance of bad habits that would increase the risk of illness or disease. Avoiding these habits simply reduces the risk of bad health. Immunisation programmes are also considered under primary prevention as prevention is certainly better than cure.
- Secondary prevention involves good healthcare because it is dependent on early diagnosis. Most diseases that are caught in their infancy can be tackled with modern healthcare methods. This is achieved without any significant long-term damage to the patient's body.
- Tertiary prevention involves limiting the complications associated with a disease. Rehabilitation of patients during and after their recovery is also classified under this banner. With tertiary prevention, we're talking about increasing the chances of a long life through decisively treating the disease or condition, including in the aftermath.

One could say that healthcare providers are longevity providers. Longevity does, however, increase the burden on society through an increase of older people in the community. With effective family planning methods in place, you may find less young people and more old people around. We now have fewer caregivers with more dependents. Longevity also increases the strain

on pension plans, national health services and the economy as a whole. What can be done about this problem? The solution may lie in anti-ageing which can boost an individual's productive longevity.

ANTI-AGEING

Social issues, stress, diseases and chronic medical conditions have created a situation where old age may occur, but without much productivity or good health. Anti-ageing treatments actually help you feel and look younger. This would naturally make you more productive and, well, happier!

The modern, fast-paced way of life means that chronic diseases have begun to affect those in their 30s and 40s. The aim of anti-ageing is to keep the young people young and make old people feel and behave like they are young. One's own mental state can also contribute to how you old you feel. Rather than retiring, one can continue to remain gainfully occupied and productive. This doesn't necessarily mean that one must not retire, but retirement and inactivity do not need to go together. An active lifestyle keeps one going for years and years and prevents the onset of the 'old person' feeling.

Apart from these philosophical and psychological arguments, it is more realistic to achieve anti-ageing through improved physical and mental functioning. There are some methods to achieve this. Optimum nutrition with calorie control is vital. The same can be said about hormone



levels; maintaining them at a desired level is vital. Controlling inflammations and oxidative damage in the body is vital. Stressful situations, activities and thoughts can be avoided to provide a healthy atmosphere for the body to flourish. Healthy pursuits like exercise and good hygiene can keep the body going strong. Sexual activity is also encouraged to keep the body running fit and fine. Finally, one can use preventive medication to tackle a problem before it becomes a serious medical condition.

These various methods of anti-ageing can provide the individual with a body that is capable of functioning healthily for years. When we couple this with improved self-image, professional and financial independence and the pursuit of hobbies and enjoyment, we can truly counter the effects of ageing.