

Life Expectancy

We often hear how life expectancy is increasing and how fortunate we are compared with those who were born hundreds of years ago. As with all statistics, the figures that we hear are not necessarily an accurate description of reality. In this particular case, it is true that expectancy has increased over the centuries, however it is not necessarily related to an overall increase in health. Decreases in both accidental deaths and deaths related to childbirth (both mother and child) factor heavily into these statistics. Undoubtedly, improved living conditions and prenatal care have also greatly affected these statistics. For every child who dies in childbirth another person must live to be 100 to create a life expectancy of 50!

While life expectancy is increasing, I am not sure that the increase is significant or that it reflects the fact that we are healthier people. In 1900, the life expectancy was 47 years. In 1950 it had risen to 68 years. That seems like a pretty good jump, 21 years in half a century. Of course, during that time great strides in sanitation and prenatal care occurred. Not many people had pure water or even flush toilets in 1900 but by 1950 almost everyone did. In 1900 most people were born at home and complications in birth were far more likely to result in the death of the infant. By 1950, most births occurred in hospitals. These two factors alone could account for the increase of 21 years.

The average life expectancy today is 75 years. If you do the math you find that life expectancy increased 21 years in the first half of the 20th century and only 7 years in the second half. This is a little disconcerting considering the fact that there have been significantly more scientific breakthroughs in the last 50 years than in the first part of the century. In addition to so-called breakthroughs in science and medicine, we have also seen the development of numerous safety products to reduce the number of accidental death including air bags, smoke detectors and helmets. Additionally, the transition from an industrial nation to an informational one in the past 50 years has reduced the number of deaths associated with industrial accidents. The way the government places power in the hands of agencies like OSHA, one would think they alone are responsible for the 7-year increase in life expectancy. What is more, greater numbers of people are adopting a healthier lifestyle. Smoking has decreased significantly in this country and record numbers of people are going to fitness centers.

This brings us to the frightening conclusion that medical science has not really had a significant impact on life-expectancy. More money has been spent in research to find cures for disease in the last 50 years than all of human history from Adam until 1950. It seems we should have more to show for it than a 7-year increase. The fact is all the attention focused at addressing disease has probably not added one year to the life expectancy of the average American. All the drugs that have been discovered and all the surgical procedures that have been done have not increased our life-span for one simple reason. We can research and fight disease as much as we want but until we begin to focus on health and its cause, we are not going to create healthier people and without healthier people, life span will never increase.

Chiropractic is not an approach to disease. It has an objective of

enabling the body to work at its maximum potential. In so doing the body has greater ability to adapt to the stresses of life. More benefit can be gained from nutrition and exercise. Resistance is higher to fight off disease, natural resistance, not the kind that is brought about by ingesting drugs into the body, drugs with harmful side effects.

Do not be fooled into thinking that these little increases in life expectancy are some major achievements. The fact is the beauty and perfection of the human body suggests we should live twice as long as we do. Begin to explore true changes to your ability to be well, including regular chiropractic care, so you can bring about great leaps in longevity for yourself and all your loved ones.