



EAST LONDON SCHOOL DAY OF DEBATE

“THIS HOUSE BELIEVES THAT ATTEMPTS TO RADICALLY EXTEND THE HUMAN LIFESPAN SHOULD BE WELCOMED NOT FEARED”

BY ROB LYONS

Living Longer

If you had been born just 150 years ago, your life expectancy would have been 40 years. It has since doubled in the developed world and is now around 80 years. This is due to improved diets and healthcare. But longer lives can put pressure on pensions and health services. Can we afford to live longer and longer? And how long can we really stay healthy for? Is it always best to live as long as possible or should we accept that the human lifespan has limitations?

Only for the rich?

In a crowded, ageing society, who should have to pay the price for a longer life? Surely it cannot be fair if only very rich people can afford to live much longer? But it seems we may not be able to afford the same quality of healthcare for all. Some might argue that if we can work out how to add decades to life expectancy then the opportunity should either be available to us all or to nobody.

However, this would be very hard to control: if the technology and knowledge are available, how can we prevent those with the most money or resources using it? This would result in unequal healthcare with the richest of us living much longer than the poorest.

Some people might argue that significantly extending our lifespan puts pressure on the next generation. Even if we manage to live much longer, we might still need to rely heavily on our children and grandchildren for longer and longer – is this really fair?

A healthy lifespan?

We should bear in mind that how long we live for and how long we remain healthy are two separate issues. Would we really want to live much longer if we spent a

large amount of our later life feeling seriously unwell?

Another issue is the difference between the body and the mind. Maybe we can slow down ageing, but will our minds be able to stay healthy too?

What's at stake?

Science is constantly developing, so we need to find answers to these questions. Should we keep trying to live longer and longer? Or should we just try to improve our health by eating more healthily and exercising? Well, some might argue that trying to extend our lifespan beyond a hundred years is just the next step in healthcare.

What kind of society we want to live in? Do we want a situation where only the well-off can extend their lifespan or do we want to try and make drugs and medical procedures available to all, whatever the cost? Could that money be spent in better ways, like making the society we already have more equal? We probably all approve of small, steady increases in lifespan, but should huge changes should worry us?





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