

Longevity has no National Boundaries or Race Limitations

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Over the centuries there have been several myths with regard to longevity. To assess misconceptions, there have been limitations to getting to the bottom of the truth regarding longevity, mainly because of the isolation of long living persons in remote areas on our planet, and the poor record keeping of date of birth of an individual who has lived long in the past, in some developing countries. Unlike the age of a tree, which can be measured by counting the rings in the main stem, the age of a human can only be verified by well-kept records that can be authenticated.

Worldwide, the developed countries, such as the United States and Japan, in general have the most centenarians due to their advanced health care provisions. However, this does not mean people in the developing countries do not have this privilege. Let us begin from the most populated countries in the world, China and India. Li Ching-Yuen (or Li Ching-Yun) was supposedly known for his extreme longevity claim and spiritual practices by means of herbs, lived either for 256 years or 197 years, reportedly to be born in 1677 or 1736 in the Sichuan province of southwest China [1]. Most of his life was spent in the mountains working as a herbalist selling lingzhi (*Ganoderma lucidum*), goji berry (*Lycium barbarum*), wild ginseng, heshouwu (*Polygonum multiflorum* thunb) and gotu kola (*Centella asiatica*), and his diet was these herbs and rice wine. He was a martial arts teacher and a tactical advisor to the provincial commander-in-chief Yeuh Jong Chyi. So the take home message from his life is a low calorie diet and physical activity. There is extreme skepticism of the age claim due to alleged fabrication. The Guinness world records is trying to confirm that a woman, Alimihan Seyiti, from a town near Kashgar in Xinjiang Province, China has been identified as the oldest ever living person in China and the world at 127 [2]. China's remote Bapan village, sometimes called longevity village where there is a high concentration of Chinese centenarians is the home to Boxin Huang, the oldest resident at 115 [3,4]. The people from Bapan village attribute their long life to eating vegetables with every meal. They also eat a lot of fruits, nuts, legumes and fish. The villagers of Bapan have no exercise culture but they stay physically active doing chores around the house. In India, there are 27,985 people aged 100 and above in Andhra, 12,654 in Tamil Nadu, and 5,431 in Kerala 5,431 (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Andhra-Pradesh-has-highest-number-of-centenarians-in-south-India/articleshow/22998325.cms>). The National Geographic named Kerala, a southwestern city in India, as one of the "fifty places to visit in lifetime". In these places, even the poorest interview subjects have valuable traits within their lifestyles, which allow them to live healthy lives. In eastern cultures such as India, respecting elders and their "practice wisdom" is very much a factor in the day-to-day activities of the people (http://www.muralinair.com/article_1.php).

Jeanne Calment of France who died at the age of 122 is currently considered the oldest person who ever lived on our planet by the Guinness world records [5]. Until earlier this year when Misao Okawa of Osaka, Japan, passed away at the age of 117, was considered as the longest living person [6]. Even though Okinawa, Japan, is considered the longevity island of the world with the highest longevity rates of around 84 years, there are several centenarians all around Japan. A list of the oldest people by country covering all continents and every race and ethnic background from close to 50 countries indicates that there have been people who have lived for over 100 years in each of them [7]. Overall females have outlived males and the number of female

centenarians living or dead is significantly greater than males. The life span of people living in Switzerland at 82.8 puts it as the country where people live the longest followed by Italy, Japan, Iceland, Spain, France, Australia, Sweden and Norway [8]. The life expectancy in the US is only the 26th highest even though it spends the highest per capita on health care than any other country in the world [8]. This could be due to the people not caring for themselves as well as the rest of the world, performing too many diagnostic and unessential surgical procedures, and a high overhead cost.

We would like to conclude that longevity is an equal opportunity phenomenon and that no matter where you live or what race or ethnic group you belong to, with a right combination of normal genes, healthy calorie-restricted diet, practice hygiene, infection control, exercise, and good connectivity with others, any person could potentially live to 100 and beyond.

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