Are Humans Living Longer Than Ever Before?

Humans live longer now than any time in known history. Is this commonly recited statement true? From a purely statistical standpoint, the answer is simple – yes. So why do I have so many paragraphs left in this article? Because statistics can be deceiving and without further investigation we can be led to some pretty erroneous conclusions.

Statistics are based on averages, so anyone in a population that dies extremely young (like an infant), will dramatically offset the figures of those who lived to a ripe old age. Infant mortality rates were very high in antiquity, so when all the numbers are crunched, the average figure for a society's mortality rate will often end up between their 40s-50s. The modern statistical average for the United States has been reported to be 78.2 years (75.6 for males, 80.8 for females). When you add in the rest of the world, that average drops to 66.57. This huge drop is due to the addition of non-industrialized nations who also suffer high infant mortality rates.

Genetically, we are no different than our most ancient ancestors and they were not preprogrammed to self-destruct at the age of 40, like is so commonly believed. I would like to address three irritating myths regarding this subject or at least the ignorant arguments I have encountered when discussing this subject.

MYTH #1

> Many people seem to believe that everyone dropped dead at the age of 40 – 45 prior to the 20th century. I have heard too many people confidently make this claim. They heard the statistic and simply assumed that everyone prior to the 20th century would have received their AARP membership at the age of 25. I am joking about the AARP, but if everyone assumes that people died of natural causes at the age of 45, then certainly 25 would be considered over-the-hill and time for the depends undergarments.

MYTH #2

> Many people credit our modern longevity to medical advancements. Other technologies have been a greater contributor to human longevity than medical. Modern medicine has helped to lengthen the lives of some people, but has also prematurely cut short many lives, considering that adverse drug reactions are the leading killer of humans in the U.S. and medical errors is the third leading cause of premature death (for more details on this please read my posts under the category "Medical Mayhem" – especially "The Dangers In Modern Medicine", "How Common Are Medical Errors" and "The Dangers Of Colonoscopies".).

MYTH #3

> Many of these same people use this statistic to support the idea that we eat healthier now and thereby live longer. People died younger because they ate all that animal fat. This proves that they have not given this subject much thought or research or they would know that heart disease and cancer were very rare just 100 years ago, so how could saturated fat be the cause of premature death?

I would assume that the average american has a difficult time understanding math and statistics. If this weren't true, no one would buy lottery tickets or toss money down the drain at casinos. It is true that according to statistical averages,

people died much younger prior to the 20th century. But the truth is, that their lives were taken by completely different causes than today. It was not cancer, diabetes or heart disease that was killing most people in times past. So what was killing them so young? Let's take a look at what were the major causes of death in centuries past and see why other technologies played a greater role than medicine.

Starvation and Malnutrition

Probably the single highest killer of human beings throughout history. Due to droughts, locusts, floods, poverty and even war, food could be extremely scarce at times and millions of people died as a result. Children are far more vulnerable to kwashiorkor. Malnourished mothers have a higher likelihood of losing their babies, so infant mortality rates were very high among the poor as was the death of mothers giving birth (who were much younger than many mothers today). It was advancements in agriculture, distribution methods and food preservation that made it possible to get the food from one location to the area where the disaster had struck.

Communicable Diseases and Plagues

Bubonic plague, scarlet fever, small pox and a whole host of diseases wiped out many humans and once again, hit children the hardest because of their developing immune system. Medical advancements did less to help with this problem than did improved sanitation. When the garbage dump is located in the middle of town and human and animal excrement runs through the city streets, disease and plagues are inevitable. Finding a clean water supply also saved millions of lives. People in the past often drank extremely contaminated water. While visiting Saint Augustine, Florida recently, we noticed that many of the houses had cisterns in the basement that were filled from drainage of rain water from the roof. This was how they obtained their drinking

water and attempted to purify it by adding chalk to the water. Many of the diseases that killed people in mass are still incurable to this day – we only prevent them by not living like pigs.

Infection

This is still one of the top killer of humans, but far, far less than before the advent of penicillin and more advanced antibiotics. Minor infections, which can now be cleared up with a simple antibiotic before going systemic, often became lethal in the past. Hunting and farming were both dangerous occupations that carried a high risk of injury, so many healthy people died as a result of an infection from even superficial wounds. Antibiotics and vaccines are the one area where modern medicine has saved millions of lives – unfortunately, we are now at a point where overuse of these drugs are quickly becoming a greater threat to human health. Hospital borne pathogens are now becoming resistant to most antibiotics.

War

It seems that the further we go back in history, the higher the death toll from war becomes. In the ancient times of melee warfare, the idea was to simply overwhelm your enemy with sheer numbers. If you found you were outnumbered, retreat became a suicidal option. Armies were engaged at such a close range, that turning your back on your opponent was certain death, so casualties were very high. These were very young men dying – much younger than today's soldiers.

My wife and I were recently in Saint Augustine and took a tour of Fort Matanza where the Ranger informed us that the Spanish artillery soldiers started training at the age of 10, so they would be experts on the cannons by the age of 14. These deaths were often very young men losing their life (12 – 25), which would bring down the lifespan averages

quickly.

We no longer have the stomach for the same level of losses from war as our ancestors did. Because of our ability to strike with accuracy from greater and greater distances, we suffer far fewer casualties. In the near future, more drones will be used in warfare, so we should see the death tolls from war decrease – at least on one side. In today's modern warfare, the U.S. will lose less than a thousand soldiers within a year of war, whereas in the past they could lose over a thousand soldiers in a single battle lasting only a day or two.

For example, the U.S. has been at war in Iraq and Afghanistan for ten years now and the U.S. death toll is around 4,486. There were 3,108 Confederate soldiers killed in three days, on July 1 – 3, 1863 at Gettysburg. There were over 110,000 Union soldiers killed in combat throughout the Civil War and a total of 360,000 total deaths to just Union soldiers. These were very young men dying, so the average lifespan figures take quite a hit during periods of war.

Though modern medicine has contributed somewhat to the lower mortality rates from injury due to war, it is certainly the technology of the weapons and armor that has lessened the toll.

We can see that other technologies played a greater role in extending human lifespan than did modern medicine. At least where our ancestor's causes of death were concerned. This is where this all gets rather ironic. If we examine this subject more closely than just a simple statistic or quick sound bite that we heard, we would see a completely different set of problems between then and now. We now NEED medical intervention just to reach the ages that our ancestors would have, if they could have adverted the problems that we have now solved (in the industrialized world). How do I know that

they would have lived as long? Because many of them did, AND without any serious medical intervention.

In order to look at this clearly, we have to stop looking at the population as a whole and using averages to fool ourselves into the idea that we have improved our lifespan and quality of life so much more than the generations that preceded us. In order to do this we must remove the impoverished from the equation. Someone who lives in poverty today have a lot less problems than those of antiquity. Here in the U.S., even the most poor among us can get access to food and medicine, something unheard of in times past. This alone makes the average lifespan appear that everyone is living comfortably into our late seventies and eighties, while creating the illusion that everyone dropped dead at the age of forty in the past. Many bloggers (vegans and paleo dieters) love to debate about the diet and life-span of paleolithic humans, but we have little record from that period to really make a strong argument. For the purpose of this article, I would like to look back around 200 years ago in the United States as compared to the last couple of decades. This way we are looking at people from similar culture and genetic backgrounds.

The argument I often hear when the fact that heart disease, diabetes, cancer and other diseases were so rare 200 years ago, is that because they died so young, no one lived to an old enough age to succumb to today's top killers. That excuse is beginning to run pretty thin now that we are seeing a higher frequency of these diseases in children. Obese and diabetic children were pretty much non-existent in the U.S. 200 years ago. What are the differences in the common diet then and now?

COOKING OIL: Two centuries ago, there were no processed vegetable oils, especially hydrogenated oils that mimic the properties of saturated fats (the hydrogenation process was not discovered until the beginning of the 20th century).

Everything prior to 1900 was pretty much cooked in saturated fats such as butter, lard and tallow or tropical oils like palm or coconut. Given today's belief, and governmental dietary recommendations, obesity and diabetes should have been rampant in children at that time with the diet being so rich in animal fat – yet it was not. Americans consume far less animal fat than they did just 50 years ago. Butter and lard consumption is a fraction of what it was prior to the war-on-fat started in the 1970s by the U.S. government. Since then, margarine replaced butter and Crisco took the place of lard. These are highly inflammatory trans fat and are used in nearly all processed foods.

SUGAR: Sugar consumption was very low in the 18th and 19th century. The average american consumed less than 30 pounds of sugar per year, whereas the average child today can eat as much as 150 pounds of sugar per year – and this is simply calculating the refined sugar and corn syrup consumed and does not account for the higher amount of starch consumed presently (8-11 servings of starchy grains). Modern grains have been bred to have a much higher carbohydrate content than grains from just 100 years ago. By the time today's children reach 50 years of age, they will have consumed over 8,750 pounds of refined sugar – that's more than 4 tons of sugar cycled through their arteries.

MODERN WHEAT: Today's wheat is nothing like its ancestor. The modern high-yield, semi-dwarf wheat used today in processed foods and baked goods is a genetic hybrid of its ancestors. This wheat was not introduced into the human food supply until the 1960s and became 98% of the wheat supply by the 1980s. Since the 1980s, there has been a quadrupling of Celiac's Disease and many other intestinal disorders, such as Crohn's Disease, Ulcerative Colitis and other forms of IBS have been steadily on the rise. Researchers have found many other gluten intolerant

diseases in patients other than Celiac Disease and have identified certain antibodies created by many people's immune systems with the sole purpose of attacking wheat gluten (link). These antibodies are responsible for many other autoimmune diseases, such as Rheumatoid Arthritis (since dropping wheat from my diet, all of my joint pains slowly disappeared over the first year) . Here is a quote from a website called The Natural Recovery Plan.com (click here to read the entire article):

> *The hybridisation and genetic engineering of wheat has resulted in a staggering 500 fold increase in the gluten content of modern-day wheats compared to the wheat our forefathers would have known and this may be one of the prime reasons behind the massive rise in incidence of gluten intolerance and coeliac disease in recent decades."*

If you wish to read one of the best detailed research on the history of our modern wheat and the problems that have possibly arisen from it, I highly recommend Dr. William Davis' terrific book "Wheat Belly" and visit his site here.

These are just some of the differences in diet from the 19th to the 20th century. Both sugar and vegetable oil (containing mostly linoleic acid) are highly inflammatory to the human body, especially the arteries. To read my documented accounts of the damage I have seen from linoleic acid that is infused to TPN patients, please read my article, "The Truth About Soy". I also have a detailed article on the damage I experienced from the high sugar content infused with the TPN entitled "The Effects Of Sugar On The Arteries". Besides seed oils and sugar, there are many other variables to consider, such as flavor enhancers (MSG and artificial sweeteners), preservatives, coloring and let us not forget GMOs (genetically modified organisms), such as "Round Up Ready Seeds" by Monsanto. (I will be covering this in an upcoming

article).

It is not inevitable that our ancestors would have suffered the same fates as our seniors today had they lived longer. To be fair, I decided to look at a very small group of men who would have lived similar lifestyles. Let's take a look at U.S. Presidents and you may find it quite surprising. If we look at the first 5 presidents, we will see that they all lived well beyond the age that those diseases should have showed up in one or more of them.

George Washington – 67

John Adams – 90

Thomas Jefferson – 83

James Madison – 73

James Monroe – 80

I wonder why these men didn't drop dead at 40? John Adams was 61 years old when he was inaugurated. Why would the people vote in a president who was already past the average life-span of a human? Because these were men of means, they were able to avert all of the other problems that killed poorer people in huge numbers. Starvation, poor sanitation and infections were less of a threat to someone above the poverty level (safer occupations), so these men lived to ripe old ages. George Washington is the youngest death in this list, but he did not die of natural causes. Washington was bled to death by his doctor (medical errors were killing people prematurely even then). Had he not been bled to death, he still may well have died anyway, because he had a respiratory infection and this was a time before antibiotics. Even so, he still lived to the age of 67 (my father had his first heart attack at the age of 66 and without the use of stents, it would have been a fatal heart attack). Let's take a look at the last 5 presidents (excluding Obama,

because he is still too young to know his fate).

Jimmy Carter – Still living at 88

Ronald Reagan – 93

George H. W. Bush – Still living at 88

Bill Clinton – Still living at 66

George W. Bush – Still living at 66

Ronald Reagan is the only one who has passed on – and he was 93 at the time. So why would I list these last 5 when the only one that died was older than any of the first 5 presidents and the rest are still alive, even beyond the average age of death? Because I wanted to take a more detailed look to determine if all of these men would still be alive had they not had the modern medicine and procedures we have today. The bigger question that we have to ask ourselves is how in the hell did the first 5 presidents live to those ages without medical intervention – especially with all that animal fat they ate daily? Remember, even a ruptured appendix or gall bladder would have taken their life at that time. Certainly with modern antibiotics, George Washington would have survived the influenza and may well have lived as long as John Adams or possibly longer.

Ronald Reagan did live to the age of 93, but also had a serious tumor surgically removed from his colon in 1985 – without treatment he may have died many years earlier. Reagan also suffered with Alzheimer's disease for at least the last decade of his life and many believe he began suffering signs of the disease even while serving as President. Without medical intervention, he certainly would have died at a much younger age. There is no record that Adams was not of sound mind (John Adam's health history). Most all of the founders were very active even late into their lives. George H. W. Bush now suffers from vascular Parkinsonism and is confined to

a wheelchair, John Adams was not in a wheelchair at 88. Bush Sr. also underwent a procedure to reduce his thyroid gland (radioactive iodine), because he suffered with Graves disease (the doctors overdosed him, destroying too much of the gland. Since then his life has been dependent on hormone medications). Adams also suffered hyperthyroidism, but his went untreated.

Bill Clinton is still with us, but clearly would not be without modern medicine. Clinton began having cardiovascular health problems at the age of 48 and underwent a coronary bypass surgery at the age of 58. It would be safe to say that Bill Clinton would have most likely never seen the age of 60 without modern medicine.

George W. Bush had precancerous skin lesions removed from his skin a few times. Of course we are told this was caused by that enemy-in-the-sky we call the sun – which was strictly put there to kill us. Could Bush have actually had more sun exposure than Andrew Jackson, who led his troops throughout subtropical states like Louisiana and Florida? "W" has had access to sunscreen his entire life, Jackson did not and lived to the ripe old age of 78 with a lead bullet imbedded in his chest from a duel he had while in his forties (Jackson's health record). Bush could have died from cancer far before the age of 65 – and he didn't have a bullet stuck in his chest for more than 30 years. Jackson had no access to sunscreen while in the hot Florida sun. Sunscreen could likely contribute to the high number of melanomas seen today, but it's extremely profitable to the manufacturers (I'll save that for another rant).

Many people today would never see their 60th birthday without some sort of medical intervention. So even though we solved all of the killers that plagued our ancestors, we found a way to level the playing field by creating a whole new set of killers. Though we have invented medications, treatment and

procedures for many of them, they hardly improve on the quality of life. We may live longer, statistically, but we live sickly, racked with pain and dependent on medications starting at middle age. If we could improve our lifestyle and eat real food, like our ancestors, we could possibly live longer and with more vitality than ever before in history. Had our ancestors eaten the crap we do, without our modern medicine, their lifespans would have been much shorter and we may not have even survived as a race.

Modern technology has given us toxic food, but plenty of medications, surgeries and other medical procedures to keep us breathing well into our decrepit eighties. Unfortunately, the party is about to be over. The medicine is not improving at the same rate that our diet and lifestyle is decaying. We are beginning to see a shortening of the average lifespan that I believe will continue if something drastic is not done to fix the standard american diet (SAD). I will continue with more evidence on this is an upcoming post. I apologize for not posting anything in a while. I actually have dozens of drafts written that I simply haven't had time to proof read and edit, so the next several articles should follow very shortly. Thank you for your patience.