TuSalud

Here’s to Life Everlasting

In theory, human life span has no limit.

October 6, 2021 By Jeanette L. Pinnace

Kane Tanaka, age 118, is the world’s oldest living person. The Japanese woman is a supercentenarian, as people older than age 110 are called. As impressive as that is, new study findings published in the journal Royal Society Open Science suggest that human beings may be able to achieve a life span exceeding hers, reports Agence France-Presse in a story featured on ScienceAlert.com.

For the study, a team of researchers from Canada, Switzerland and Sweden examined data on Italian and French individuals older than age 105 from the International Database on Longevity. (The database is a compilation of information on 1,100 of these extremely older people from 13 countries.)

Next, scientists used a mix of statistics, survival analysis and computer methods to determine the chances of people living to the outer limits of old age.

The researchers made two notable findings. They concluded that ultimately people’s mortality risk stops climbing over time and remains steady at 50-50 and that it’s possible for humans to live at least until age 130.

“Beyond age 110, one can think of living another year as being almost like flipping a fair coin,” said Anthony C. Davison, PhD, a professor of statistics at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, Switzerland, and the study’s lead researcher. “If it comes up heads, then you live to your next birthday, and if not, then you will die at some point within the next year.”

In addition, according to the researchers, the results suggest that human life span may indeed be unlimited, which supports previous statistical evaluations of data collected about very old people. “This study strengthens those conclusions and makes them more precise because more data are now available,” Davison observed.

He believes that as more individuals live to be 110 and older, the more possible it becomes that someone might reach their 130th birthday, a one in a million chance according to Davison. Still, just living to the age of 100 is a rarity for most people.

“In the absence of major medical and social advances, ages much over this are highly unlikely

ever to be observed," Davison stressed.

To learn more about factors that affect people's life span, read "When It Comes to Health, Place Matters."

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