

June 25, 2002

Heart to Heart Talk

With Philip S. Chua

Can aging be delayed?

Why do we age?

Just like machines and engines, our body ages because of the cumulative damages to our cells, tissues and organs (resulting from daily “wear and tear” and the self-abuse humans are well known for) that exceeds our body’s ability to repair them. These damages lead to obvious signs of aging: sags, bulges and wrinkles, gray hair, loss of muscle, bone and nerve integrity, impairment of hearing and vision, incompetence of various sphincters (bladder and anal, etc), lowered immunity and resistance, and increased susceptibility to diseases and infections. The arteries all over the body undergo severe arteriosclerosis (hardening) which leads to circulatory deficits in various organs (brain, heart, glands, legs, etc) causing stroke, heart attack, reduced libido and other hormonal deficits.

Can we delay or reverse the aging process?

There have been so many claims made, especially by unscrupulous manufacturers and distributors of “food supplements,” that their products can delay or reverse aging, make people 5, 10, or more, years younger. There is nothing farther from the truth. Unfortunately, although we are all looking for that “fountain of youth,” the potion or lotion (or, in whatsoever form), medical science still has nothing to offer us in this department. Fifty one top scientists in the world recently refute claims of this “miracle treatment” ad advertised all over the globe and warn the public against this fraud. All the infomercials currently flooding the market and media are bunk, aimed at deceiving the unsuspecting public for a fast buck.

What is the danger of trying some “anti-aging” drugs?

Some of these drugs have adverse side effects that could lead to illnesses. Some may not have bad effects but are simply worthless, useless, ineffective in what they are purported to do. Taking them is like taking an empty capsule or a capsule filled with water from the faucet. And they are invariably very expensive. So, if you wish to give away your hard earned money, it is best to stay away from these fraudulent vendors of deception, and instead you can donate it to your favorite charitable organization to aid our underprivileged fellowmen. This will definitely

give you genuine joy and sense of fulfillment and inner peace, which could make you feel great and younger, without being deceived and cheated.

How about herbal anti-aging medications?

The same is true with herbs and “natural products” being marketed out there as anti-aging agents. They are worthless. The multi-billion dollar “anti-aging miracle” industry is so effective in their marketing schemes that gullible people all over the globe are duped into buying their products, only for the defenseless victims to realize a bit too late that have simply wasted their money. I would like to underscore the fact that to date, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that will slow down or reverse the aging process. Simply modifying your lifestyle to a healthier one, which will not entail added expenses (and in many instances even save you money), can make you look and feel younger, safely and wisely.

What about growth hormones?

Growth hormones (hGH) level, like other hormones naturally produced by our body, drop with age. Infomercials mislead the uninformed public into thinking that ingestion of the commercially available hGH will “normalize” the level of hGH, slow down or reverse aging, and restore vigor, sex drive, muscle tone, and a youthful appearance. This is not so. Taking hGH may make someone feel better but it is downright dangerous. Anyone who claims they can reverse the aging process is lying, according to S. Jay Olshansky, demographer of the University of Chicago.

Can these drugs cause cancer?

“Youth-enhancing” hormones, like DHEA, estrogen and testosterone, which are massively promoted as a miracle cure that will reverse aging and make people years younger, have been found to raise the risk of cancer of the breast and prostate.

When is growth hormone used?

Growth hormones are medically prescribed as a part of the treatment regimen for some growth disorders in children, but some use them to reduce body fat and improve muscle tone. These hormones can “stimulate” the growth of tumors in the body. Additional bad side effects include excess bone growth, kidney problems, diabetes, carpal tunnel syndrome, lung and heart failure, and possible premature death.

Do antioxidants have anti-aging effect?

Unfortunately, they do not. Antioxidants, like Vitamin C, E, and A (beta

carotene), are widely advertised to reverse aging and prolong life to age 120 years. Scientists are astounded and angry about this claim by marketers of these and other “food supplement” products, because the claim is unfounded and medically baseless. However, scientists the world over recognize that anti-oxidant rich foods such as fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of illnesses like heart disease, cataracts and macular degeneration, and cancer. Megadoses of vitamin E and selenium can cause bleeding that could be fatal, and that of beta carotene may increase the risk of cancer. Beware: some food supplements on the market may have serious, sometimes even life-threatening, side effects.

How then can we “stay and feel” young?

The process and effects of aging are faster in some individuals, slower in others. To some extent, the changes are within our control. While there is nothing to reverse or slow down the aging process, there are things we can do to make us feel and look “younger.” Self-abuse (like smoking, drinking more than two alcoholic beverage a day, not doing exercises, eating high-fat, low-fiber diet, not having adequate hydration, not getting enough sleep and relaxation, not having peace of mind, taking everything in life too seriously) speeds up the aging process in our body, literally (anatomic and physiologic) and figuratively speaking. Putting an end to self-abuse and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, plus the prudent use of protective cosmetic products (to ensure proper hygiene and facial and skin moisture) tones not only our sagging dermal state but our mental and spiritual state as well. In addition, once-a-day multivitamins and minerals plus whatever prescription drugs we take will certainly help us live a healthier life. Taking delicate care of our body, without unwisely throwing money down the drain, will most assuredly make us look and feel younger and better. After all, our body and our pocketbook both deserve that.

