Aging, Health, and Longevity in the 21st Century

By Dr. S. Jay Olshansky
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Life expectancy across the globe has risen rapidly since 1900, but the rate of increase has slowed in most parts of the world and reversed in others. A debate has been ongoing for more than 30 years on whether there is an upper limit to human longevity, and whether it will become possible to break through barriers to further increases in longevity. I will explain why this deceleration in the rise in longevity occurred; why upper limits to life expectancy exist and how close we are to them; and then I’ll explore international efforts now underway to break through the glass longevity ceiling.

S. Jay Olshansky received his Ph.D. in Sociology at the University of Chicago in 1984. He is currently a Professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Research Associate at the Center on Aging at the University of Chicago and at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and Chief Scientist at Lapetus Solutions, Inc. The focus of his research to date has been on estimates of the upper limits to human longevity, exploring the health and public policy implications associated with individual and population aging; forecasts of the size, survival, and age structure of the population, pursuit of the scientific means to slow aging in people (The Longevity Dividend), and global implications of the re-emergence of infectious and parasitic diseases. Dr. Olshansky is on the Board of Directors of the American Federation of Aging Research; he is the first author of The Quest for Immortality: Science at the Frontiers of Aging (Norton, 2001) and A Measured Breath of Life (2013); and co-edited Aging: The Longevity Dividend (Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 2015). In 2016, Dr. Olshansky was honored with the Donald P. Kent Award from the Gerontological Society of America, the Irving S. Wright Award from the American Federation for Aging Research, and he was named one of Next Street’s Influencer in Aging.

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