

## **Longevity Science**

### **Interview with Robert Butler, M.D.**

KYLE JENSEN: Welcome to SAGE Crossroads, the premier online forum in issues of human aging. These podcasts feature lively discussion with the experts on the ethical, political, economic, scientific, and societal implications of aging related science. Thank you for listening.

I'm joined now with Dr. Robert Butler. Dr. Butler is the president and CEO of the International Longevity Center.

Dr. Butler, in your mind, what is your strongest argument for pursuing longevity science?

ROBERT BUTLER: Well, if we could slow aging, we would simultaneously slow the occurrences of the diseases of old age which would dramatically improve the quality of life, would reduce the amount of time that people are ill, in other words it would concentrate morbidity, and it would save money.

KYLE JENSEN: Based on what you see in today's population, do you think that the world is ready to embrace a population that's living longer?

ROBERT BUTLER: Well, they aren't going to have any choice. They are going to have to embrace it.

KYLE JENSEN: What are the major hurdles that you foresee in overcoming negative attitudes about the study of longevity science whether they are in public perception or in politics?

ROBERT BUTLER: Part of it is denial, that is, not really wanting to face aging at all. For example, as seen in the scam called anti-aging medicine which is a nothing science and baloney and yet is very popular, but it is an expression of the fact that on one hand people would like to live longer and on the other hand they have no idea of what they are getting themselves into.

KYLE JENSEN: How should the population work to overcome the hurdles of negative attitudes towards aging?

ROBERT BUTLER: I don't know about on an individual basis, but I think it is a matter of cultural change. The way in which I think that cultural change might occur is if older people themselves are much more active and not so passive. Older people tend to be very passive and dependant and not speak up for themselves. So I think there has to be a cultural change, and maybe the baby boomers might be more expressive in what they want and need as they get older.

KYLE JENSEN: Would you like to see a greater concentration on this from perhaps our political leaders?

ROBERT BUTLER: I don't trust the political leaders. I think it has to come from the older people themselves. Political leaders are avoiding the topic of aging.

KYLE JENSEN: How long do you think it will be before we see a major breakthrough in longevity science?

ROBERT BUTLER: Probably about 20-25 years.

KYLE JENSEN: And that's your optimism on it?

ROBERT BUTLER: Yeah. I'm talking about a real breakthrough. We have already been able to slow aging, so if there were new funding and new resources made available, we'd be able to speed it up, but given the realities that we now have a stagnant budget in science in the United States and less money than we used to for developing science, I think we will be held back for at least 20-25 years.

KYLE JENSEN: So you are saying that the science is ready, but the funding isn't there?

ROBERT BUTLER: Science is nearly ready, and the funding is not there. It is declining.

KYLE JENSEN: The audience of SAGE Crossroads is made up of scientists, policy makers, and curious consumers. If there is one closing statement you would like to make to them about the benefits of longevity science, what would it be?

ROBERT BUTLER: Well it would be a repeat of what I said earlier. If we could delay or slow aging we would also be slowing the occurrence of disease which would advance the quality of life, reduce the amount of morbidity, and contain costs.

KYLE JENSEN: Thank you. On behalf of SAGE Crossroads, I'm Kyle Jensen.