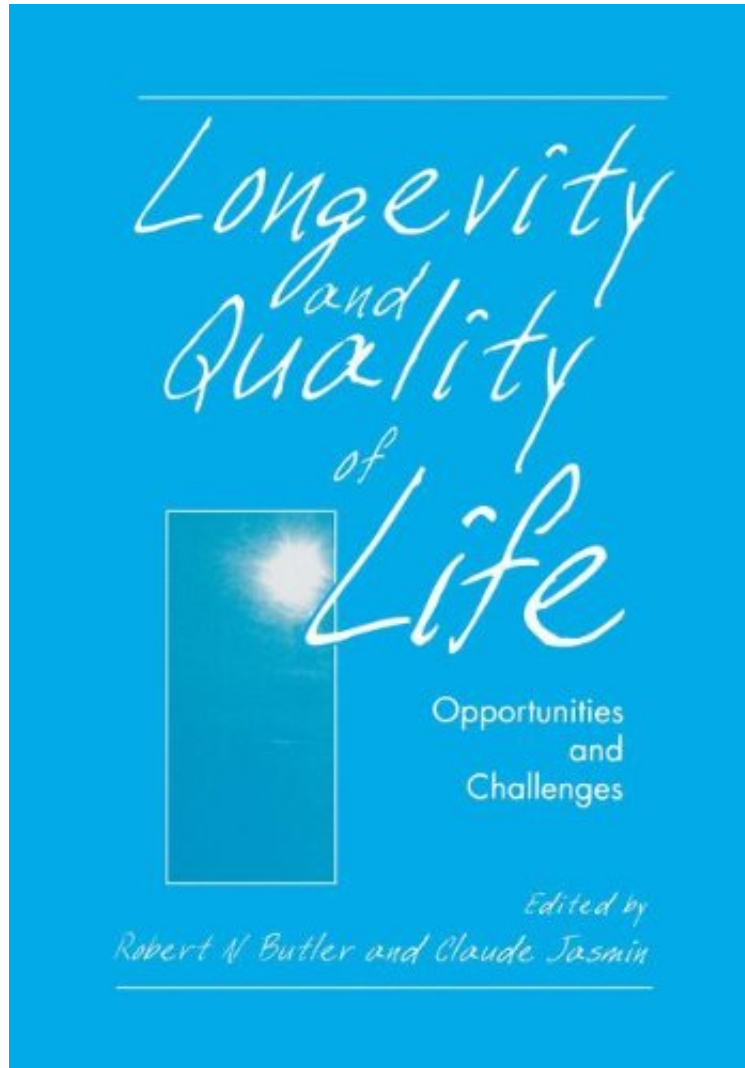


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Longevity and Quality of Life: Opportunities and Challenges

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Nations around the world are experiencing a spectacular increase in longevity. Society as a whole is being challenged by issues arising from this revolution in longevity. Although the specter of the loneliness and existential suffering of older citizens is such that some people under the age of 65 find it difficult to conceive of a long-term future, persons

over 85 have proven that aging does not necessarily preclude a healthy and productive life. Extraordinary progress in both curative and preventive medicine justifies optimism about the quality of life and state of well-being that can be enjoyed even in great old age. We should look to professionals in diverse fields to develop creative solutions to the inevitable issues that will arise with aging. Governments must prepare for the future health of their citizens by making long-term investments to educate all sectors of society in the value of good nutrition, exercise, and lifestyles that enhance well-being throughout life. Also, governments should realize that the main cause of health care expenditure is serious illness which occurs in persons of all ages, and not predominantly in older people. Early detection can help save lives, as well. Health and longevity of life will ultimately end as a political issue. What is needed is long-term government investments necessary for a viable health policy. The question arises: will world leaders be able to commit to such a policy? Two major socioeconomic phenomena may have a regulating effect on this issue. The first is the emergence of pressure groups that have come into being in response to a particular health issue, such as AIDS. The second is the emergence of ethics committees in developed nations that deal solely with health issues.

`In a comprehensive way the book presents the opinions of biologists, gerontologists, demographers, citizen health care professionals and politicians on longevity. The book is exciting reading which shows that our society, at the dawn of the 21st century, is on the way to adapting to the conditions and needs brought about by longevity of its population. These proceedings are an important tool for health-care officials, economists, politicians and decision-makers in the field of social services and public welfare. Geriatricians will also profit from reading this book. They may develop a completely different approach to longevity or life in the later days of our lives.' *Gerontology*, 47:1 (2001)