

The New England Centenarian Study

**Current participants, please reach out by phone
or email if you have not heard from us recently!**

SPRING 2026

EST. 1995

Do you know anyone

age 100

or older?

CONTACT US:

**Toll-Free Phone:
1-888-333-6327**

**Email:
agewell@bu.edu**

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**JOIN US
FOR OUR
WEBINAR!**

May 14, 2026
12:00pm ET

Zoom Meeting ID: 932 1046 7199
Passcode: 312567
Join by Phone: 1-646-876-9923

You'll hear our investigators discuss topics like brain health and nutrition, followed by Q&A!

Four NIH Studies Strong

Inside this newsletter, we describe for you a number of our major advances in the fields of exceptional longevity and healthy aging.

Some of you may not know that we actually are currently conducting four separate studies, each with their own funding and unique set of aims and goals. Findings and discoveries from each one greatly inform the others, so having these four studies under one roof greatly improves our efficiency and accelerates our progress.

We are so very appreciative of the time and dedication of our very special study participants and their families. None of this would be possible without you. Thank you, thank you!

Our Cherished Funders

Funding provided by



**McKNIGHT BRAIN
RESEARCH FOUNDATION**
Preserving memory, enhancing life

**The Samowitz Family
Foundation**

Our first funding came from the Alzheimer's Association in 1995 when we showed with early results that centenarians delay, and in some cases escape, Alzheimer's disease.

We proposed that the study of centenarians and their family members could lead to imparting that advantage on the rest of us.


Longevity Consortium's



Centenarian Project



Resilience/Resistance against Alzheimer's Disease in Centenarians & Offspring






One of our supercentenarian participants, Herlda Senhouse at age 111

“You gotta pace yourself. You do the things you want to do, but you just take life easy, you don’t try to rush to do things.”

Our Study’s Scientific Publications

Thanks to all of our study participants and the researchers, our studies have had a big impact upon researching longevity and healthy aging. That impact can be gauged by the number of research papers published by our specific studies. Here is the tally so far since 2019:



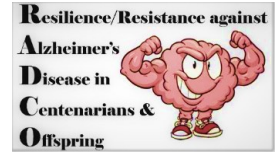
51



191



61

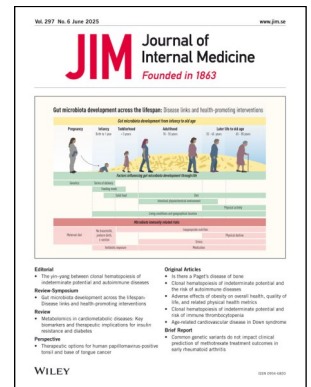


13

= 316 scientific articles!

Race and Ethnicity Associated Differences in Propensity to Live to 100

People of different races and ethnicities can vary in terms of their risk for specific diseases like diabetes, some cancers, and sickle cell anemia. They can also vary in terms of their propensity to put on weight when exposed to certain diets. This makes sense as different ancestries evolved in different environments with different stresses or advantages resulting in different genetic adaptations. Some of those adaptations likely impact upon the ability to age well and live to very old age.



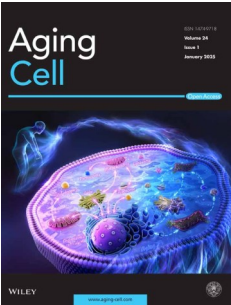
Recently the US Census added mortality data for Asian populations to data that already exist for White, Black and Hispanic populations which allowed us to make the following findings:

- ◆ Though Black Americans have lower average life expectancy, after about age 85, they have a higher probability of living to 100+ years than White Americans.

At age 70:

- ◆ 8% of female and 5% of male Asian Americans go on to live to age 100.
- ◆ 7% of female and 3% of male Hispanic Americans live to 100
- ◆ 4.5% of female and 2% of male Black Americans live to 100.
- ◆ 3% of female and 1% of male White Americans live to 100.

An Exceptional Longevity Stem Cell Bank



“This bank is really exciting”
-Chara Herzog,
Kings College
London

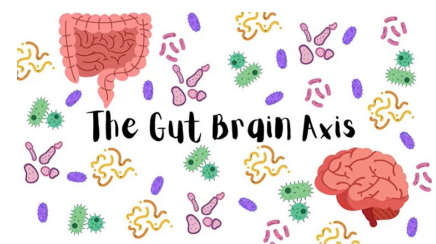
Led by Dr. George Murphy at Boston University’s Center for Regenerative Medicine (CReM), his laboratory group published their study in the prestigious journal *Aging Cell*, describing their success in establishing a bank of induced pluripotent stem cell lines from now, over 50 centenarians enrolled in our studies.

The article describes the success in establishing these lines as well as the ability to create specific tissues from these lines, such as brain, heart, muscle and skin cells that are functionally identical to the same cell types of the centenarian that provided the blood sample used to create the iPSC line. Dr. Murphy’s team is currently studying how these cells are able to combat the processes that lead to aging and aging related diseases, like Alzheimer’s.

This study and the iPSC bank are so exciting that it was also highlighted in the journal *Nature*. Dr. Murphy’s group readily shares these lines with researchers around the world, thus greatly enhancing the potential of making important discoveries with these very rare and important resources.

Todd Dowrey, Samuel Cranston, Nicholas Skvir et al. A longevity-specific bank of induced pluripotent stem cells from centenarians and their offspring. *Aging Cell* 2025; e14351.

Why a Sample of Poop?



We have all sensed that certain foods make us feel certain ways. Coffee wakes us up, turkey makes us sleepy, sugar revs up our toddlers. That’s because food contains substances that enter the blood stream from the gut and travel to the brain where they have these (and many, many other) effects.

Our diet, genetics, how we manage our stress, and our immune and nervous systems all have an effect on what types and relative amounts of bacteria live in our gut microbiome. These different bacteria, in turn, make various proteins that go into the blood stream to effect these and other systems.

Some species of bacteria produce substances, like essential amino acids, that are not available in any other way and that are very important for health. They can also produce other substances that enhance brain health and likely enhance resilience against dementia.

By collecting stool samples from our participants with an easy-to-use self-collection kit sent to you, we can study this poorly understood but likely critical piece of how some people’s brains are aging so well.

If you have not yet completed this component of the study and are willing to, please let us know!



Dr. Stacy Andersen, PhD, is an Associate Professor at Boston University and Co-director of the New England Centenarian Study

“Our goal is not to get everyone to live to age 100. What we’re trying to understand is: How do you live to whatever age—your 70s, 80s, or 90s—in very good health?”

Making Headlines

Unlocking the Secrets to Living to 100. Dec 23, 2025.

Time Magazine’s Dominique Mosbergen interviewed Dr. Stacy Andersen about the our efforts to understand how centenarians and their children age so well and delay or escape aging-related illnesses.

The NECS is the largest study of centenarians and their family members in the world. The study, began in 1995, has recently been, thanks to funding from the National Institute on Aging, generating a huge amount of biological data from blood samples, and more recently, stool samples, provided by our amazing and wonderful study participants.

Combined with all of the clinical data we collect and cognitive and physical measures that we conduct, we now have the best opportunity ever to discover the underlying biology and environmental exposures that facilitate such slow aging and resilience. We are also searching for what are called biomarkers, or specific proteins and metabolites in the blood that help us gauge how well a person is aging and if they are destined to live to 100 or older.

Dr. Andersen discussed our newest study called RADCO (Resistance/Resilience against Alzheimer’s Disease in Centenarians & Offspring). RADCO finds, among our centenarian and offspring participants, those who have the cognitive function of people who are thirty years younger—people that Dr. Andersen and other scientists call “cognitive superagers”.

A very interesting finding is emerging from the study of these individuals: Among those who donated their brains for study after they passed away, we found evidence of Alzheimer’s disease, yet when they were alive, these participants functioned spectacularly well. Therefore, they had some form of resilience that kept them from exhibiting memory loss and other cognitive problems. It was actually super-resilience. It is essential we find out how that resilience works and see if that can be a treatment to prevent cognitive decline.

50% of Life Span is Genetic

The New York Times

The New York Times’ Gina Kolata interviewed Dr. Tom Perls about a recent study published in *Science* indicating that 50% of the ability to live to old age is genetically determined and the other 50% is environmental exposures and health habits. The study was based upon an analysis of survival data from identical twins reared apart versus together and considering only deaths related to aging and aging-related diseases.

Dr. Perls commented that these findings confirm what we have noted and published for a long time—one’s genes play a more and more prominent role in living to older age beyond about 95 years. To live to age 105 or 110 years, the role of genes may be as high as 70% in explaining who lives to these most extreme ages and who does not.

29th Annual International Centenarian Consortium Meeting



The International Centenarian Consortium (ICC) is a gathering of all the centenarian studies in the world that meets annually at a location chosen by the host study. As this year's host, we held the meeting on Cape Cod in Massachusetts.

At a Glance... The 29th Annual ICC Meeting

- ◆ 2 keynote speakers, 29 research presentations
- ◆ 13 virtual presentations from University College Dublin (Ireland), University New South Wales (UK), University of Sao Paulo (Brazil), Universite Catholique de Louvain (Belgium), Universite de Montreal (Canada) and Leiden University (Netherlands), as well as Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Oregon State University, and Tufts University (United States)
- ◆ 30 in-person attendees and presenters represented Keio University (Japan), University of Aveiro (Portugal), National Institute of Health and Medical Research (France), Chonnam National University Medical School (Korea), Amsterdam Medical Center (Netherlands), University Gothenburg (Sweden), and Osaka University (Japan), as well as Iowa State University, University of Georgia, Tufts Medical Center, Boston University, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and Harvard University (Unites States)
- ◆ Some presentation highlights:
 - ◆ Health and Well-Being Among Centenarians: Findings from the Health and Retirement Study
 - ◆ Tracing Longevity Across Generations: Health and Disease Trajectories in Familial Longevity
 - ◆ Digital Voice Biomarker Profiles of Centenarian Cognitive Superagers
 - ◆ Neuropsychological and neuropathological profiles of centenarian cognitive superagers
 - ◆ Psychosocial Determinants of Longevity: A Qualitative Study Among Swiss Nonagenarians and Centenarians
 - ◆ Whole blood transcriptional signatures of age and survival identified in the Long Life Family Study
 - ◆ Metabolite Signatures of Chronological Age, Aging, Survival and Longevity
 - ◆ A Gene Expression Clock for Longevity Stratification
 - ◆ Gut microbiome contributions to functional independence in older adults and centenarians



Dr. Thomas Perls, MD, is a Professor of Medicine and Boston University and Co-director of the New England Centenarian Study

“We are entirely beholden to and so thankful for our incredibly special and amazing centenarian and offspring study participants”

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Data and Samples We Collect From Study Participants.

Are We Missing Something From You?

We have learned a lot about living to extreme old age. One of the enticing things we have learned is that there can be a strong genetic component to this survival advantage but also that these are genes that protect against aging. These genes slow the aging process and decrease one’s risk for aging related diseases like Alzheimer’s, heart attack, stroke, and certain cancers.

We believe there are other protective factors besides genes playing a role like certain foods, exercise, some medications, and/or special types of bacteria found in the intestines. We are also finding that there are ways to predict exceptional longevity and to measure how slowly a person is aging. To figure out these factors and markers, we are generating a lot of data from cognitive and physical function testing we perform on our study participants over time and from the blood and stool samples we also collect over time.

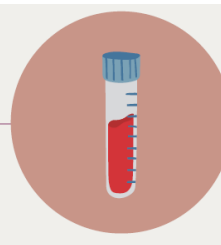
Below is a list of items we collect in the study. We do our best to collect these data and samples within a few weeks of each other.

If you have not completed any of these components yet and are willing to do so, please give us a call.

Our staff are working to complete as many outstanding items as possible. If you are unsure if you’ve completed a certain component, don’t hesitate to ask!



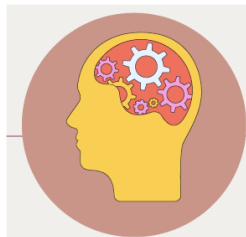
QUESTIONNAIRES



BLOOD DRAW



STOOL SAMPLE &
DIET QUESTIONNAIRE



COGNITIVE
TESTING



ANNUAL PHONE
INTERVIEWS



ACCELEROMETRY



Participant Spotlight

"My Dad, Roger Wonson (age 100!!), and I are so happy to be a part of the Centenarian Study!

The cognitive testing was challenging, fun, and exciting.

The research staff at Boston University has been exceptional!"



Watch Roger play the drums here:
<https://tinyurl.com/43cubchy>

Recruiting a Diverse Group of Study

Participants

On page 2 of this newsletter, we highlight research showing that different ancestral origins can be associated with different probabilities of living to 100 years and older ages. We know that specific combinations of many different genes (called a genetic signature) are associated with the ability to become a centenarian.



Cris Ibarra and Dr. Stacy Andersen sharing information about our studies at a community event

The degree of that association, what genes make up a signature and the importance of co-existing different health related behaviors or exposures such as specific diets and social networks, all vary according to race and ethnicity. For us to solve this puzzle of what it takes to live to 100+ years, we must find out what of these factors are different versus what are in common among different ancestral groups.

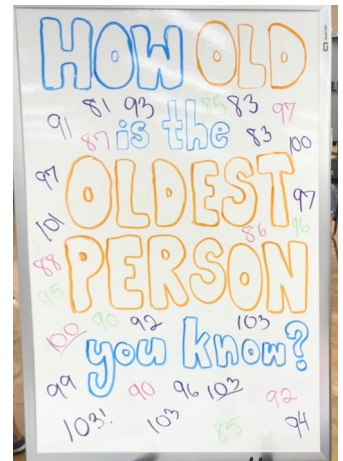
It is also very important that we have a sample of participants in our studies that is as representative of the American population as possible.

We are taking a number of different approaches to enhance the diversity of our participants:

- We have translated all of our study materials into Spanish and we provide Spanish presentations about our studies and more generally about healthy aging to primarily Spanish speaking groups. We concentrate our recruitment efforts in Latino communities such as Los Angeles, East Boston and South Boston.
- One of our study sites, Georgia State University, is based in urban Atlanta and has a strong experience in effectively engaging with the local Black American community through local churches, health centers and other community agencies.



Jaweria Shah and Dr. Tom Perls present at the East Boston Senior Center



If you know anyone from any under-represented group who is a centenarian or a relative of a centenarian and you think they could be interested in our study, please have them reach out to us!

Good News From Elsewhere in Science

14 things to do over the course of a person's life to reduce their risk of dementia by almost half!

Many people say that the most important thing as they age is that they have a healthy brain. But many assume that there is nothing one can do to prevent or delay dementia (loss of memory and other cognitive functions). This is not true. Doing the below can have a major impact and each is really important. Wear those hearing aids!!!

1. Education beyond high school
2. Decrease harmful noise exposure to reduce hearing loss and for those with hearing loss, use hearing aids
3. Detect and treat depression
4. Use head protection in contact sports and when riding bicycles
5. Regular physical and strengthening exercise
6. Never smoke cigarettes
7. Maintain systolic blood pressure of 130 mm Hg
8. Detect and treat elevated LDL cholesterol
9. Maintain a healthy weight and treat obesity as early as possible
10. Detect and effectively treat diabetes
11. Minimize alcohol intake
12. Prioritize age-friendly and supportive community environments and housing and reduce social isolation by facilitating participation in activities and living with others
13. Get regularly screened for and treat vision impairment
14. Reduce exposure to air pollution

MEET OUR RESEARCHERS



Tom Perls, MD, MPH
RD Evans Distinguished
Professor of Medicine
(Geriatrics)
Boston University



Stacy Andersen, PhD
Associate Professor
of Medicine
Boston University



Paola Sebastiani, PhD
Professor of Medicine
*Tufts University
School of Medicine*



Daniel Segré, PhD
Professor of Biology,
Bioinformatics, and
Biomedical Engineering
Boston University



Stefano Monti, PhD
Professor of
Medicine and
Biostatistics
Boston University



Albert Tai, PhD
Research Assistant
Professor (Immunology)
*Tufts University
School of Medicine*



George J. Murphy, PhD
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of Medicine
Boston University



Sofiya Milman, MD
Professor of
Medicine
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Vonetta Dotson, PhD
Professor of Psychology
and Gerontology
Georgia State University



Seho Park, PhD
Graduate Research
Fellow
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Research Project Managers



Brad Petrowitz



Brian Gould



Cristian Ibarra



Natalie Fletcher

Research Specialists



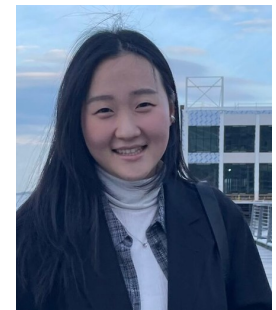
Parsh Mody



Evan Carey



Sam Keen



Jennifer Lee



Jaweria Shah



Jace Eaton



Ariel Lee

If you are a participant or family member of a participant and have not been in touch with us in the past 6 months, please reach out by phone or email, and we will connect you with the appropriate research staff member to continue your participation!

agewell@bu.edu

1-888-333-6327 (toll-free)