



# The Healthspan Imperative

*A film about America's next great priority*

NARRATED BY MARTHA STEWART

## **HOW TO USE *THE HEALTHSPAN IMPERATIVE***

Welcome to the Resource Guide for *The Healthspan Imperative*. We encourage you to use this information as you share the film with your class, senior center, group event or friends.

If you would like to show the film, you can download it from this site: <https://vimeo.com/102050478>. You can download it to your desktop by clicking on the download button beneath the film summary. We also would be happy to send you a DVD of the film. Please let us know at [nlloyd@agingresearch.org](mailto:nlloyd@agingresearch.org).

You can also view it on YouTube.com here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rGpJDyiUXs>

Please consult the following pages for more information. We also can help you with any additional resources about the film, just let us know.

[WE ASK THAT YOU PLEASE SHOW THE FILM IN FULL, INCLUDING ALL CREDITS.]



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## Introduction, Talking Points and Discussion Question Suggestions

### How to Introduce the Film

*The Healthspan Imperative* is a new short film about our country's next great priority: solving the challenges brought about by the aging of the American population. Narrated by Emmy Award-winning television show host and bestselling author Martha Stewart, it features exclusive interviews from leading scientists and aging research experts such as Laura Carstensen, Felipe Sierra and Dan Perry.

For more than a century, the human race has enjoyed an unprecedented increase in additional years of life expectancy. Through advances in science and technology, many can expect to live life well into their 80s, 90s and beyond. But this increase in longevity has not come without consequences. With each passing year, the percentage of people age 65 and older in the United States—and much of the world—increases. This unprecedented rise in the world's older population is expected to bring a “Silver Tsunami” of chronic disease and disabilities of aging: a flood which could overwhelm the health care systems of many nations.

This is an issue that has come to the forefront of our national consciousness and a challenge that has been undertaken by some of the world's best scientists, doctors and professionals. The goal: Increase not just our lifespan, but our *healthspan*, the length of time we spend free of the costly and harmful conditions of old age.

*The Healthspan Imperative* explores the challenges created by the longevity revolution and the potential of aging research to turn back the clock; not to make us older for a longer time, but so that we might enjoy more years of healthy, vigorous life.

The film was produced by the Alliance for Aging Research for the [Healthspan Campaign](#), a national initiative led by a coalition of organizations and researchers that advocates for scientific and medical research into the basic biology of aging in order to extend healthspan. After you view the film, we encourage you to get involved in the Healthspan Campaign by checking out the website and signing up for alerts.

Aging research, the film shows, is not science fiction. There are discoveries being made that demonstrate the aging process can be altered and that chronic diseases can be postponed or even prevented altogether. But in order to make this happen, more federal support for aging research and more collaboration among research agencies are a necessity.



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## Interesting Facts to Share/Points for Discussion

- Aging research and the National Institute on Aging (NIA) are still vastly underfunded at about \$1.1 billion a year out of the approximate \$32 billion a year the National Institutes of Health (NIH) receives overall. For every dollar appropriated to NIH, only about 3.6 cents goes to the NIA.
- There are currently 10,000 Americans a day turning 65; by 2030, about one in five Americans will be past that age.
- Eighty percent of seniors have at least one major chronic condition, and half have two or more. And it's not cheap. Chronic diseases of later life are costing the nation more than \$1 trillion per year—a figure expected to increase to \$6 trillion by the middle of this century.
- With sufficient funding and focus, research that slows aging has the potential to extend healthy years of life, and simultaneously postpone the costly and harmful conditions of old age.
- Currently, the great majority of federal medical research funds go to studies of specific chronic diseases in isolation from each other and largely divorced from the underlying aging processes that lead to all of them. Less than one percent of the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) annual budget funds research into the underlying biology of aging and its role in age-related disease.
- However, there is a momentous shift occurring. Of the 27 institutes and centers at the NIH, 20 are now collaborating in a "[Trans-NIH Geroscience Interest Group](#)" in order to better understand the relationships between the biological processes of aging and age-related chronic diseases and disabilities.
- At a time when medical research is feeling squeezed, Congress should consider a new funding model for coordinated research into aging across both the NIH and other federal health and research agencies. There's a precedent for this type of "Interagency Coordinating Committee" funding model with diabetes. Such an approach would avoid a tap on existing funds as well as the "disease-versus-disease" battles that plague NIH appropriations year after year. Disease-specific research will always remain important, but this approach would augment collaboration and help lift all boats.
- One of the most effective strategies in "bending the cost curve" in health care is preventing age-related chronic diseases in the first place. An October 2013 study published in *Health Affairs* by researchers at the University of Southern California, Harvard, Columbia and the University of Illinois at Chicago, hypothesizes that it will be possible by 2030 to develop interventions that increase human life expectancy at age 51 by 2.2 years—and that most of those added years would be spent in good health. These researchers also estimate that the increase in healthy years of life would have an economic benefit of approximately \$7.1 trillion by the middle of this century.



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## What Can Viewers Do to Help?

- Start by looking up your members of Congress contact information on [House.gov](http://House.gov) and [Senate.gov](http://Senate.gov).
- You don't have to call their Washington, D.C. office—You can also call the district office in your hometown or the one closest to you. Before you call, look your members up online to see what issues matter to them so that you can open the conversation by saying something you know about them.
- Ask for the staff person who works on health or science issues. If you are a researcher, tell them about your research in simple terms. Speak to how far the aging research field has come, what is promising now in your research, what has consensus in the field, and how it will translate to bigger solutions such as lengthening healthspan (tell them what that means). Show your passion and excitement and they will get excited with you.
- If you are not a researcher, tell them why you care about the aging issue from a professional or personal perspective.
- Thank them for supporting aging research. This is especially important if you are a researcher that receives, or has ever received, funding for your work.
- Invite them to your lab or university department. If they can't visit, ask if you can come to their office to talk with them in person.
- Offer to be a resource on science issues in your area of expertise and/or to be a voice for the impact of federal funding. Just offer to help.
- When you come to Washington, D.C., schedule a visit with your members of Congress.
- Sign up to receive action alerts at <http://www.healthspancampaign.org/email-signup/>. We will keep you informed and provide opportunities to weigh in with your story.



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## Discussion Questions

**1) What is healthspan?**

*Healthspan* refers to the length of time we spend free of the costly and harmful conditions of old age.

**2) If this approach to preventing or delaying diseases of aging works, how will people die?**

People will die of the same chronic illnesses and other conditions that they presently die from, but due to increased healthspan, they will die later and will be sick for a shorter period of time.

**3) If this doesn't work, what will happen?**

The aging of the Baby Boomer generation will double the number of Americans over age 65 by 2030 to some 70-75 million; half of whom will be over age 75. The "oldest old" (85 years+) will quadruple from the size it was in 2000. If chronic age-related diseases and disabilities increase in lockstep, the fiscal, health care and caregiving consequences could be catastrophic. Continuing to pursue cures and better treatments for diseases such as cancer and Alzheimer's disease in isolation from their root causes in aging will not likely stem the tide of health care costs, lost productivity and quality of life for seniors.

**4) Isn't this playing God? (Or some version of the "Should we really interfere at this level?" question)**

It can be said that we began changing the natural order of life and death when humans began sterilizing water, washing hands and living in controlled environments. Every medication from aspirin to the polio vaccine was a man-made response to the "natural" world. Some religions object to childhood vaccines, organ transplantation and other modern medical procedures, but most support advances that improve the length and quality of human life. There is a wide consensus among scientists who study aging that only by altering the underlying damage that accumulates over time can we be truly successful in delaying or preventing age-related chronic diseases.

**5) If people are living longer, won't this cost our health care system and economy more?**

There will be costs associated with longer lived populations, even if future seniors are significantly healthier than today. However prominent economists and demographers have calculated that a modest two-year increase in healthy aging for people over age 51 on balance would save over \$7 trillion to the U.S. economy by the middle of the current century.



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**6) Do other researchers and experts believe we can achieve this impact on healthspan or is it just this select group of folks? (Answer pointing them to the research agenda.)**

There is a growing consensus among leading scientists in North America, Europe and Asia that aging is a malleable process and that healthspan can potentially be lengthened to human benefit. A [statement making this case](#) has been endorsed by over 100 leading health and medical research experts, including Nobel laureates, medical school deans and award-winning scientists. The Healthspan Campaign seeks to expand this consensus among many more scientists, health officials and business and governmental leaders as well as the American public.

**7) How far off do you think we are from achieving this goal?**

Predictions of future scientific advances cannot be stated with certainty given variables of funding, scientific obstacles and public acceptance. However, some scientists who have studied the matter believe interventions that slow aging in laboratory animals might be safely tested in human subjects within five to 10 years. True breakthroughs could pass through regulatory approval in a like amount of time with strong public and political support.



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## Ways to Share the Film

*The Healthspan Imperative* is free to use. We encourage you to share it through the following ways:

1. Use the website: [www.healthspancampaign.org/film](http://www.healthspancampaign.org/film). Here you can watch it, get the latest news, and share it to your social media site of choice. You can also download it to your desktop.
2. Watch it on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/allianceforaging](http://www.youtube.com/allianceforaging). You can use the embed code to put it on your website or blog.
3. Tweet about it using the hashtag #healthspan. The Twitter handles we are using are [@aging\\_research](https://twitter.com/aging_research) and [@hscampaign](https://twitter.com/hscampaign). So be sure to follow us!
4. Post a link on your Facebook page. And like our [Healthspan Campaign](#) and [Alliance for Aging Research](#) pages.
5. Share it on your website, blog or in your newsletter. Remember you can embed it right on your website with the embed code from YouTube.
6. Sign up for Healthspan Campaign updates at <http://www.healthspancampaign.org/email-signup>.

Note: Although we encourage you to share the film, we would request that you do not make any edits or additions to the film without first seeking our permission. We also would request a link back to our website should you share this film. For any questions, please contact Noel Lloyd, communications manager, at [nlloyd@agingresearch.org](mailto:nlloyd@agingresearch.org).