

Life course influences on old-age longevity: drivers of socioeconomic differences.

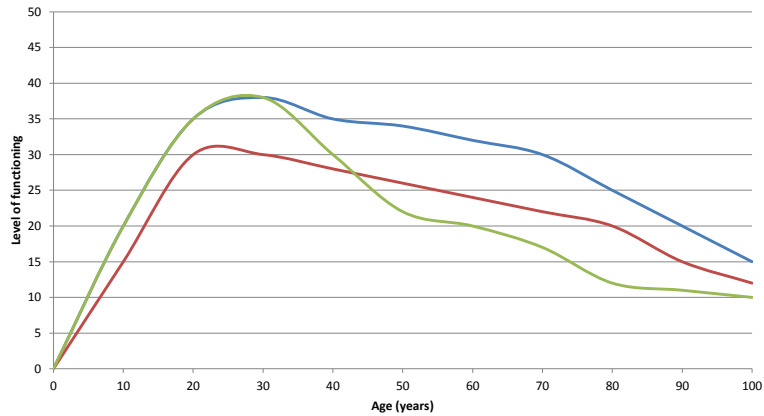
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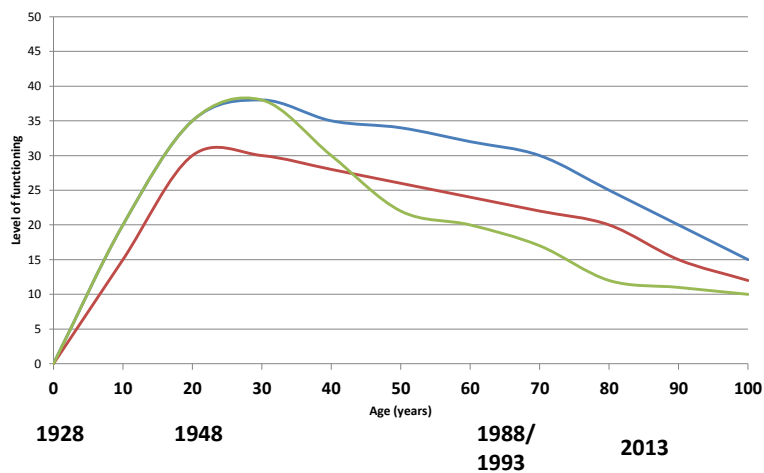
Background.

- The recent increase in life expectancy at middle age has been too rapid to be due to genetic mutation.
- Most efforts to explain increased longevity have looked elsewhere: almost exclusively, to medical care innovation and behavioural change.
- Such narrowing of focus may be premature, because it ignores life course influences on social-biological processes.

Strachan-Sheikh model



Strachan-Sheikh model



Growth & development: 1928-1948.

Social policy and social science context:

- Pre-WWI: Rowntree surveys of poverty (standard of living life cycle); 1904 Inter-departmental Committee (school meals).
- 1930s: Boyd Orr surveys of child nutrition; Family Endowment Society (family allowances).
- WWII: Beveridge Report; full employment; food rationing.
- Post-WWII: welfare state (life course redistribution).

Working life: 1948-1988/1993.

Socio-economic context:

- Spread of nuclear family; fewer children; better housing.
- Full employment (to mid-1970s).
- Rising real wages; nutrition.
- Holidays; shorter working week.
- Labour market niches; early retirement; disability benefit.

Retirement: 1988/1993-2013.

Emergence of *Third Age* (end of employment & family responsibilities to loss of functional independence):

- Occupational & private second pensions.
- Functionally healthy.
- Self-realisation & pleasure.

Social participation & networks confer resilience in face of adversity of ageing.

Nutrition; exercise.

Minimum Income for Healthy Living for retired.

Life course questions.

- Are the drivers of increasing longevity the same as those driving socioeconomic differences in longevity?
- Is the biological effect of these improvements in the conditions of life cumulative or are there critical periods?
- Which social policies address past disadvantage as well as present need?