

18 September 2019

Dear Lord Patel,

In response to your call for evidence on 'Ageing: Science, Technology and Healthy Living', I am pleased to enclose a Nuffield Council on Bioethics briefing note on 'The search for a treatment for ageing' (also available at: <http://nuffieldbioethics.org/project/briefing-notes/bioethics-briefing-note-search-treatment-ageing>).

The briefing note considers the emerging field of geroscience, also called biogerontology, that is exploring the biological processes that underlie ageing. This research has led to the discovery of several potential interventions for ageing, some of which are already being tested on humans in clinical trials. There are a number of barriers to testing ageing interventions in healthy people and there are calls for an ethical framework for geroscience research.

If a safe and effective treatment for biological ageing was discovered, it could have far reaching consequences for the economy, personal identity and how people live and work later in life. For example, enabling older adults to be more active and live longer could have many benefits for individuals, families, and communities.

However, many uncertainties remain about the effects that treatments for ageing would have on human health span and lifespan, the economy, models of care, health inequalities, personal identity, and how people work and live later in life. Some argue that ageing and dying is becoming increasingly medicalised, and that other elements of successful ageing, such as personal relationships and independence, are being side-lined. More work is needed on considering the social and ethical implications of developments in this area.

We hope the briefing note is useful for your inquiry. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like more information.

Yours sincerely



Hugh Whittall

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