

PROF SURESH RATTAN

Prof Suresh Rattan heads the Laboratory of Cellular Ageing in the Department of Molecular Biology at Aarhus University in Denmark. Rattan earned his PhD in 1982 from the National Institute for Medical Research in Mill Hill, London, based on his research project testing the error theory of cellular aging. He earned a DSc in 1995 from the Faculty of Natural Sciences at Aarhus University, based on his post-PhD research work on the molecular biology of human cellular aging. He is also a recipient of an honorary doctorate from the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences.

Health and healthy aging is to maintain adequate physical and mental independence in activities of daily living. It is not an absence of disease, but maintenance of independence even while using biomedicine, technology, and all other social, psychological and biological means of support.

The most important aspect of healthy aging is to continuously define the word adequate at all ages of life – learning to be satisfied, accepting and enjoying what my body and mind can and cannot do at various stages of life. In short: active acceptance and non-denial of reality are the most important aspects to healthy aging.

Sadly, the near future is going to be dominated by the biomedical obsession of considering aging as a disease, and continue to use the rhetoric and approach of “waging war against aging” – something that I disagree with. I am not trying to defeat aging; I am not running any war against aging. But the present economic model and hawkish scientists are pushing the other approach.

My father was my personal idol for healthy aging. Although he died, at the age of 86, almost 20 years ago, he was the icon of peace, intellect, generosity and love. Globally, I adored the late Nelson Mandela and the present Dalai Lama, for their dignity, self-acceptance, universal love, forgiveness, and happily aging in spite of the usual biological, physiological problems of the body.



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