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Nature vs. Nurture vs. Father Time

An interview with Professor Parminder Raina
Science of Aging Researcher, McMaster University

What can we learn from studying how we age?

My research is actually focusing on looking at the processes of aging, diseases of aging, and functioning in the aging from biology of aging to social aspects of aging. So we are trying to integrate how, let's say, somebody's genetics interact with environmental factors such as air pollution and puts them at risk of developing a particular type of disease. By the time we hit 2050, one in four people are going to over the age of 65. So from that perspective, we want to understand why people age in a healthy way and others don't.

What can we learn from aging research?

We are studying one of the largest studies in Canada where we are going to be following 50,000 Canadians between the ages of 45 and 85 for the next 20 years. And what we are doing is to capture information which looks at their economics, their psychological health, their physical health, their social well-being, their biological environment and we put all these things together to understand why some people take certain trajectories and others don't.

What does the future hold for your research?

Our major goal is to understand the process of aging. And what we learn from this process, in the coming years, will feed into the policies that the governments develop, at the federal level or the provincial level, and also influence the clinical practice in relation to how we manage and treat as people age.