

Quality of life and longevity: a study of centenarians.

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OBJECTIVE: Interest in centenarians has focused on two particular aspects: the antecedents of extreme old age and the psychophysical well-being of the very old. Our study deals with the latter aspect and aims to assess the quality of life of Italian centenarians.

METHOD: Using data collected using two questionnaires designed to investigate quality of life in elderly people, three groups of 38 elderly subjects were compared: centenarians and subjects aged between 75 and 85 years and 86 and 99 years.

RESULTS: The centenarians complained less spontaneously about their health (maintained in part by medical treatments), but declared having greater functional disability. Their cognitive function appears to be reasonably well preserved and they have lower scores for anxiety and depression than the subjects in the two younger groups. They consider themselves religious, satisfied with their financial situation but no longer interested in sex or involved in recreational activities. They report greater satisfaction with life and with social and family relations than do less elderly individuals.

CONCLUSIONS: The centenarians we interviewed seem to be well adapted to their lives and to maintain a more positive attitude than the subjects in the two younger groups.

* From PubMed (www.pubmed.gov), a service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health.