Parental longevity strong predictor of centenarians

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Family background, early-life and mid-life conditions help to determine one's longevity, new research shows.

The Center on Aging/NORC, Chicago, arrives at this conclusion in a research paper, "Determinants of Exceptional Longevity: Early-Life Conditions, Mid-Life Environment and Parental Characteristics." The report finds that parental longevity and some mid-life factors are greater predictors of longevity than childhood conditions.

"The results of this study demonstrate that both the region of children residence and the household property status [are] the two most significant variables that affect the chances of a household to produce a future centenarian (for both sons and daughters), the reports' authors, Leonid Gavrilov and Natalia Gavrilova, state in their report. "Spending a childhood in the Mountain Pacific and West-Pacific regions in the U.S. [was] found to increase chances of long life (by a factor of three) compared to the Northeastern part of the country."

Among the paper's findings:

● Wives of centenarians tend to live 0.8 years less on average than married sisters of centenarians.

● People born between September and November have significantly higher chances of exceptional longevity than people born in March, suggesting a long-lasting influence of season of birth on longevity.

● Early exposure to infections decreases chances of survival to advanced ages, affecting mortality later in life.

● Parental longevity is one of the strongest predictors of survival to age 100.

● In smaller families, siblings born to mothers younger than 20 years have more than twice the chance to live to age 100 compared to their brothers and sisters born to 40-year-old mothers.

"The findings of a beneficial effect of young maternal age on offspring survival to age 100 in humans have a biological explanation, the report states. "There is empirical evidence that the quality of female eggs in human beings rapidly declines with

age and this deterioration starts rather early—before age 30.

“Maternal age influences the biology of the mother-fetus relationship, with a negative effect on fetal development and predisposition to severe diseases, such as type I diabetes,” the report adds.

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