The Robert N. Butler
Columbia Aging Center

For the first time in history, people around the world are enjoying life expectancies beyond age 80. Our challenge is to ensure that these longer lives are filled with purpose and good health—a benefit for all generations. Informed by science and policy, societies must adapt to make the most of longer lives.

**OUR PURSUIT**

We seek to answer the following questions: how can we improve aging for an increasing number of people? What combination of factors from human biology, education, work, and individual choices promote resiliency? How can we understand the causes behind poor aging outcomes, particularly in disadvantaged populations, where inequalities accumulate over the lifespan? Our researchers focus on health, work, and culture to address these queries and inform policies that benefit all of society.

**Health**

Health needs to be built and strengthened throughout the lifecourse. The complex nature of human aging results in large disparities among people as they age, a heterogeneity that requires a precision prevention approach. Our research provides the evidence to policies designed to keep our health age lower than our chronological age.

**Work**

As employed adults, we spend most of our waking hours at work. Worklives and work environments not only impact the productivity of nations and inequalities within communities, but also individual cognitive and physical health. By examining, for instance, how work and workplaces might boost or impair cognition, we can better target human resource strategies to help maintain productivity and cognitive health across our worklives.

The Columbia Aging Center’s mission is to contribute to the knowledge base needed to optimize longer lives and help translate it into societal change. As one of Columbia’s university-wide centers, we carry out this mission with in-house faculty and staff, together with a network of faculty research fellows on campus as well as collaborating research centers around the world. The Columbia Aging Center approach to aging science is innovative, multidisciplinary and translational, applying scientific results to policy and practice.
Culture: Attitudes and Environments
Societal attitudes toward aging permeate institutions and influence evolving feelings about how old we feel. Our research has shown that negative old-age attitudes are detrimental to health as populations age. Physical environment can support or debilitate aging: neighborhoods and city infrastructure play a crucial role and can contribute to vast aging inequalities.

FURTHERING AGING SCIENCE AND POLICY THROUGH EDUCATION AND TRAINING
To meet population aging challenges, the Columbia Aging Center concentrates aging science resources and cultivates future researchers and policymakers. Age Boom Academy, our signature training program for journalists and researchers, trains scientists and communicators to translate research findings on aging and make it accessible to an audience. Our Faculty Research Fellowships pilot new work on how to optimize aging. For students at all levels, we offer a variety of opportunities to foster and expand a corps of aging scientists, including the Robert N. Butler Summer internships, coursework, doctoral training, and a visiting post-doctoral and senior scholar program.

WHO WE ARE
Dr. Robert N. Butler, an aging research pioneer who coined the terms “ageism” and “longevity revolution,” was Founding Director of the National Institute on Aging. As part of his legacy, the Columbia Aging Center at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health was established in 2013. It has grown to encompass both a talented team of scientists and policy advisors, as well as the International Longevity Center USA, which Butler founded in 1990.

Human aging is a complex process influenced by biology, behavior, and micro and macro environments. A multilevel approach is necessary to further our comprehension of how to improve human aging and bring new understanding to policies and institutional change. With this in mind, we investigate the modifiability of human aging and how to optimize it and examine stark inequalities in longevity. We focus on three major domains: health, work, and culture as reflected in our attitudes and environments.

Our research and policy network draws from a range of disciplines such as physiology, medicine, neuroscience, lifespan psychology, lifecourse sociology, epidemiology, demography, economics, and engineering.

OUR FACULTY
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