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How old are you really?

You may be younger than you think.

By Brad Douglas  
Special

A test divined by a Wilfrid Laurier University psychologist may surprise you.

The test, devised by Dr. Robert Morgan, chairman of the WLU psychology department, shows how old you really are and the figure may be higher or lower than the one shown on your birth certificate.

Dr. Morgan said bodies age at rates that differ for each individual. And there's good news here. Dr. Morgan said there are steps you can take to slow the aging process.

In the age laboratory at Laurier--the first of its kind in the country--your body age can be determined in a brief test.

"The ability to see objects up close, your ability to hear sounds at a high frequency, and the force at which your heart pumps blood, are three functions which normally deteriorate as the body grows older," Dr. Morgan said, "and these are measured in the 15 minute, painless test."

"Life experience is positive but aging is not," Dr. Morgan said. "It reflects a deterioration of the body's abilities. We are measuring that and hope to understand more fully what causes it, what speeds it up and what slows it down. There is a lifetime of research here."

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As one of North America's top authorities on applied gerontology (practical uses of research on aging) the Laurier professor has completed two books on the subject: "Measurement of Human Aging in Applied Gerontology," and "Interventions in Applied Gerontology." Both are due for release this summer as paperbacks.

The books will be texts for a new Laurier course, "The Psychology of Aging," to be introduced at intersession and then added this fall as part of the regular curriculum.

The course, to be taught by Dr. Morgan, will be the first of its kind in the province and a reflection of the growing interest in this new field of serious study.

Unlike other courses on aging, the WLU course include laboratory age measurement, something Dr. Morgan has been working with and developing for 20 years.

"We don't have to wait for someone to die to see what has effected his lifespan," he said. "Individuals can do many things to help themselves right now--quit smoking is a common example."

Does he see a breakthrough in aging research?

He says scientists have stated that under ideal conditions the human body can last 140 years. The fact that we live an average of half that indicates the conditions we live in are less than ideal.

The AGE (for Adult Growth Examination) test, administered at the university in about 15 minutes, offers an opportunity to uncover some clues and measure the effectiveness of individual attempts to slow aging.

Dr. Morgan currently is looking for volunteers whose age ends in a nine (19 through 79) to take the free test to assist with the research.

Those interested can leave a message for him at Wilfrid Laurier University at 884-1970. At the very least, you'll discover how old you really are.