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FIRST PERSON >

## More Good Years

If Boston biologist and entrepreneur *Christoph Westphal*, 40, has found a way to turn back aging, then why aren't we all getting younger?

Your anti-aging research has led to some magic-sounding pills that will allegedly help people stay healthy longer. Have celebrities like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Rupert Murdoch, and Barbara Walters really hunted you down because they think you've discovered the fountain of youth?


Yes. When you have a jet, a boat, and an island, what you really want isn't more money, it's time and health. I generally tell celebrities to eat less and exercise more. But then they want to know about the pills.

> **If I could get your drug, would it help me, a 44-year-old man with a serious coffee-ice-cream addiction, to live to be 200?**

A century ago, babies dying and infectious disease kept life expectancy very low. Washing hands and antibiotics got us to about 60. But once we solved those basic problems, people began dying from diseases of aging like cancer and heart disease. If we can cure those, we might get another five to 10 years of life expectancy, not another hundred.

> **Can I buy the drug on the black market? You must pop a few of them every so often. You can't, and I do not. I wouldn't tell you if I did. We are in the process of getting FDA approval, which will take several years.**

> **During your research, you found a connection between aging, skinny people, and red wine. Explain.**



*"We might get another five to 10 years of life expectancy."*

Skinny animals of all kinds, including human beings, live substantially longer than average. The thinner we are, the less food we take in, the more we turn on the sirtuin survival pathways. This phenomenon allows starved animals to overcome a lack of food to live longer and still reproduce. Red wine has a molecule that mimics calorie restriction and activates the sirtuin genes. Our drug is 1,000 times more potent than the molecule in red wine.

> **I've heard that you have mice on your drug that could give Lance Armstrong a run for his money.**

A normal mouse can run 1 kilometer. Mice that take our drug can outrun regular mice by a factor of two. It's like they trained for the marathon, only they didn't.

> **Let's get back to me. How will your drug impact my health if you are right?**

We are all afraid of a long period of illness before we die. Our animal data shows that our drug

extends life span by extending health. I think that's how you and I want to die. We want to be totally mentally there and healthy to the end.

> **Why is John Henry involved in your company rather than keeping his eye on the Red Sox pitching rotation?**

He heard what we were doing and asked how he could help. "You can invest \$50 million," I told him. He likes to tell the story that he was going to put in \$50 [million] until he actually met me, and then decided on \$20 million.

> **In June you sold the company that you founded, Sirtris Pharmaceuticals, for \$720 million, but you've stayed on staff. Why sell?**

Glaxo offered to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in our science. That fundamentally increases the odds that Sirtris will be able to help cure sick people with a drug approved by the FDA. And at an 84 percent premium to our stock price, what were we going to do?

— Tom Matlack