



Opening Statement of Ranking Member Jay Obernolte as Prepared for Delivery

Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee Hearing – The Fountain of Youth? The
Quest for Aging Therapies

September 15, 2022

Good morning. Thank you, Chairman Foster, for convening this hearing. And thanks to our witnesses for appearing before us today.

Aging is an inevitable occurrence for those of us lucky enough to live long enough to experience it. Since the phenomenon of aging began, humans have been exploring ways to slow down the effects of aging and extend human lifespan. This anti-aging mentality has strong roots in our culture – just look at the variety of skincare products on the market today or the title of this hearing. Throughout history, humans have always been seeking the “fountain of youth”.

What we have convened to discuss with our witnesses today, though, is not how we can end the aging of human beings, but how we can extend collectively the period of healthy living, or health span. This means not necessarily extending the lifespan but extending healthy life before aging related diseases are able to take hold. If achievable, this could have huge implications on society, as the physical and mental effects of aging are slowed, and we are able to live healthy lives for a longer time.

Our witnesses today represent a variety of stakeholders who have been engaged on this topic in the scientific community. One common theme I have found from their testimony is their emphasis that geroscience, the science of aging research, is not focused on expansively extending human life to immortality. Rather, they are utilizing a number of scientific methods and techniques to uncover treatments that could generally slow the effects of aging and prevent the prevalence of disease in older generations as they age. The research they are doing ranges from the reversal of aging to isolating senescent cells to preventative therapeutics that can have across the board health implications.

I am looking forward to hearing more about these different therapeutics and treatments, but also about how traditional methods of living a healthy life by practicing good diet and exercise habits can play into this equation.

Federal investment into geroscience research has primarily been at the National Institutes of Health. In 1974, NIH established the National Institute of Aging to fund research focused on the effects of aging and examine the issue in depth. The National Science Foundation has also awarded grants focused on the study of senescent cells and biological factors that contribute towards aging. Additionally, I would be remiss to leave out the huge amounts of private sector capital that has been invested into aging research.

Aging is a topic that interests us all, as we all hope to live long and full lives. It is an interesting perspective to consider that this challenge of aging is really a challenge born from the success of living longer lives.

Thank you, Chairman Foster, for convening this hearing. And thanks again to our witnesses for appearing before us today. I look forward to our discussion.

I yield back the balance of my time.