

Bruce Dan, MD

Executive Director/ The Patient Channel

“A century ago, one million Americans were over the age of 65, by the year 2030 that number will be more than 75 million. Hello, I’m Dr. Bruce Dan, Executive Director for The Patient Channel. In our program, Healthy Aging, you’ll learn how to develop a lifestyle that makes it possible to grow old gracefully, even if you have a medical condition. It begins with understanding the natural changes that occur with aging, as well as those diseases we can control or forestall with early detection or medical intervention, or changes in our lifestyle.”

Narrator

We begin to age the moment we are born. Human nature being what it is, we do not notice it for years. Then one day we discover that our hair is turning gray. We find out that we need eyeglasses to read the newspaper. We also notice that some of our friends seem to be aging better than others.

But is robust health in old age a matter of good genes, or related to a healthful lifestyle, or is it a combination of both?

Robert Moser, MD

Exec. V.P. Emeritus/ Am. College of Physicians

“You have to have some, some intellectual stimulation. I think to sit on the front porch and rock is inviting rapid demise. I think that’s the end of the world.”

Narrator

Meet Doctor Robert H. Moser and his friends. They practiced medicine in small towns and big cities across the country. Several taught in medical schools. Now they are neighbors retired and living south of Tucson. The youngest is 76, the oldest 86. They meet weekly to report on and discuss the information that appears in the latest medical journals. It is one of their best means of intellectual interaction.

Robert Moser, MD

Exec. V.P. Emeritus/ Am. College of Physicians

“I think Dave would agree with this, I think when we were all growing up in medicine the literature use to evaluate success in medicine as survival and prevention of death and morbidity. It’s only been in the last 10 years that quality of life has begun to enter into the equation about successful medical management, and I think that’s a tremendous advancement.”

Dave: “There’s a French saying that loosely translated says, do not do what the doctor says, do what the doctor does. Drink wine.”

Robert Moser, MD

Exec. V.P. Emeritus/Am. College of Physicians

“I think that intellectual stimulation is perhaps as critical as diet and exercise in maintaining viability unto a healthful old age.”

Narrator

Doctor Moser himself is 81 and has practiced and taught medicine for over 30 years. His advice to facilitate healthful and graceful aging is to understand what to expect as we age and to develop a realistic plan based on how we want to enjoy our later decades.

Robert Moser, MD

Exec. V.P. Emeritus/Am. College of Physicians

“The point is balance. I think it’s a balance between intellectual stimulation, physical activity, diet, avoidance of cigarettes, moderation in alcohol and trying to control stress in your environment.”

Narrator

One of the differences between today and the not-too-distant past is that a greater number of the diseases that afflict us as we age are brought on not by infections but by the way we live each day.

Robert Moser, MD

Exec. V.P. Emeritus/Am. College of Physicians

“We’re no longer dying from plagues and from pneumonias and things like that. But due to the fact that unfortunately the population has become obese. And this is an international phenomenon, not just in the United States, its happening in every western country where the population is getting fatter and as a result of that we’re getting more type 2 diabetes, more coronary disease and more hypertension, and more arthritis.”

Narrator

Because of the type of medical problems we encounter as we age, some form of exercise is a key part of any plan.

Dr. Ianthe Lambie: “Hello how are you? Good to see you again. So how’s things been going? I see you’ve lost some weight since the last time?”

Woman patient#1: “What I’ve been doing is, I been going, I initiated going up and down the steps.”

Dr. Ianthe Lambie: “Oh, that’s great, that’s great. That’s what we want people to do like everyday, daily activities like park a little further, and use the stairs instead of the elevator, things like that is great to put into your routine. Because people tell me, oh I don’t have time to go to the gym, I can’t afford to join the gym, I don’t have time you know, that’s the usual excuse nowadays. But we could always build it in to what were already doing in the day, so that’s great.”

Narrator

Dr. Moser started an exercise program nearly 40 years ago.

Robert Moser, MD

Exec. V.P. Emeritus/Am. College of Physicians

“In 1967 I began to run and I ran until about 1992 and I was doing two to three miles maybe five days a week but then I ran out of knees and my knees began to bother me, and then I began to bike and now I bicycle.”

Narrator

If you’re new to regular exercise: try walking 10 minutes every day at a brisk pace, for the first week, then increase by 5 minutes a week until you’re walking 30 minutes or more per day. Patients should talk with their doctors before they begin any exercise program.

Robert Moser, MD

Exec. V.P. Emeritus/Am. College of Physicians

“Exercise to me is doing something that: you work up a little sweat, your heart rate gets a little faster, you sustain it for maybe a half an hour or three-quarters of an hour. It doesn’t matter whether it’s bicycling, or walking, or swimming, golf, if you carry your clubs, you know, and you walk the course that’s fine.”

Narrator

Safety tips to get the most out of your exercise plan:

- *wear sturdy shoes with ankle support
- *drink plenty of water, both before and after exercising
- *avoid exercising in temperature or humidity extremes
- *exercise with a partner if possible
- *consider walking indoors or in a mall if you’re concerned about safety
- *stop exercising immediately if you develop chest pain or tightness, shortness of breath, dizziness or lightheadedness.

Exercise can help lower blood pressure and cholesterol, and if you use lightweights it can help build muscle. Don’t think you have to undertake a vigorous workout to gain the benefits of exercise, just about anything will do.

Ianthe Lambie, MD

Family Physician

“If you hate to exercise there’s something like dancing or swimming just walking that you don’t have to think of it as exercise, just keep moving.”

Narrator

Finding a good physician is another part of that plan.

Robert Moser, MD

Exec. V.P. Emeritus/Am. College of Physicians

“A family physician would be just fine, who we can communicate with, and who understands about our concepts of quality of life. Who is willing to listen to us and will pay attention to what our needs are and we can call on the telephone and not get a tape recording, not easy to do but it can be done and I think you should insist on it.”

Dr. Ianthe Lambie: “It was 140/80 today and that’s a little bit high. What I would want you to take a look at is decreasing your salt intake that would help a lot. I don’t know if you eat a lot of salt?”

Man patient #1: “I eat a lot of salt, smoked salmon you name it.”

Dr. Ianthe Lambie: “One easy thing that you could start. Just one high reading I’m not going to, its not that high that I’m going to say you need to go on medicine. But it’s something we’re going to have to take a couple more times and take a look at and make sure its not staying up high.”

Man patient #1: “ I’m surprised. It’s usually in the 120’s.”

Dr. Ianthe Lambie: “Okay that’s good. What the goal is for you would be just 120/80 or less.”

Narrator

Many of Dr. Lambie’s older patients have arthritis. She counsels them to begin an exercise program to increase their flexibility and lessen the pain, and she often prescribes medication, available either by prescription or over the counter. But most of the disease she sees involves the heart.

Ianthe Lambie, MD

Family Physician

“The most common diseases are cardiovascular disease, specifically high blood pressure, stroke, heart attacks, coronary disease.

Robert Moser, MD

Exec. V.P. Emeritus/Am. College of Physicians

“Coronary disease, although there is a major genetic component to that, largely can be prevented by taking proper drugs. Hypertension can be controlled.”

Narrator

Because older patients take so many medications it’s important that health care workers and patients stay vigilant about preventing potentially harmful drug interactions.

Ianthe Lambie, MD

Family Physician

“It’s important to let your doctor know everything that you are taking; I try to ask what about herbal supplements, what about teas? Because the patients don’t realize the interactions that things can have, so that you might go through a list of medications of what are you taking and they leave out the extra supplements and stuff that their friends or family members have given them.”

Narrator

Here’s an Always/ Never list to keep in mind:

Always ask your health provider why each medication is prescribed and what it is intended to do.

Always make sure you understand when and how to take each medication

Always take your medications exactly as directed

Always take a list of your medications with you to the doctor each time

Always read labels on medications carefully, you can request large print from your pharmacist

Always contact your health care provider if you experience any problems or side effects with the medications.

Never take any medication that has expired.

Never put different medications in the same container. They can interact with each other before you take them.

Never share your medication with someone else

Never stop taking a medication without first talking to your health care provider. Some medications must be stopped gradually to avoid problems.

Robert Moser, MD

Exec. V.P. Emeritus/Am. College of Physicians

“In my instance I have hypercholesterolemia, I have too much cholesterol and I brought it down to normal levels by taking drugs. I have hypertension. My blood pressure is normal because of the drugs I am taking. Preventive medicine is the wave of the future. Now I’m not saying people are going to live forever. There is a normal, natural aging process that I think is a part of normal living. But there are many illnesses that we can now control.”

Narrator

Because patients are not going to live forever, another thing to remember is not to be afraid of having a younger doctor. In fact, a much younger doctor ensures older patients will likely have the same physicians for the rest of their lives.

Look around at the people who are in their 70's, 80's & 90's and see the happiest, and healthiest of them tend to be the ones who have remained active and connected to their community. So while all of us will age, how is that some are able to age so gracefully? We'll take a look next.

Narrator

“Meet Catherine Tomeo. She plays the violin just about every night of the week, in small orchestras and string quartets. She is 68 years old, which in this particular string quartet makes her the youngest in the group by at least a decade.”

Catherine Tomeo:

Violinist

“Well, I started playing the violin at 42, because I knew it would be a lifelong struggle. Because you don't just learn how to play the violin, and that's it, you learn it, you never learn it. So you always have that momentum of always struggling with the violin. And that does keep you going.”

Narrator

She began taking lessons with Joe Leary, now 91 and still a local guru to more than a few musicians of all ages.

Joe Leary: “now I'm making that up.”

Catherine Tomeo

Violinist

“He was a very fun teacher, and I met a lot of people, his students, through him that were very nice.”

Narrator

This group of musicians exists to make beautiful sounds but they also support and sustain each other which can help them all stay more healthy as they age.

Susan Lekoff, PhD

Harvard Medical School

“As older people age they often experience extreme social isolation which puts them at risk for a whole sort of mental health problems, like depression and anxiety about being alone and not having someone to be able to call upon in a medical emergency.”

Ray Albert

Cellist

“After I retired at 72 I started playing cello at 73. And I find it extremely stimulating and satisfying to do. There are times when I can go out at night to play. I’ll be tired and we’ll sit down and start playing and it just revs everything up intellectually and physically. And by the time we’re finished I’m not tired at all.”

Narrator

Catherine tries to repay Joe for the music lessons and the life lessons he’s taught her.

Catherine Tomeo

Violinist

“He was always taking care of somebody. His aunt lived with him and then she went into a nursing home. He had a girlfriend for like 40 years and she was like 25 years older than him and he took care of her. When his friend died, I’m thinking, well gee: he has no family...but his students are like family, so I’m thinking that someone should be that good to him, not that I’m that good to him but, I do what I can for him.”

Catherine Tomeo: “Hi Joe got your supper for you.

Joe Leary: “Oh nice to see you, you look great!

Catherine Tomeo: “Are you hungry?”

Joe Leary: “I’m starved!”

Catherine Tomeo: “And I’ve got your laundry. What’s on the Red Sox?”

Narrator

She’s careful to make sure he eats well and gets the proper nutrition.

Catherine Tomeo: “If you’ve got broccoli, brown rice, organic brown rice, you can’t go wrong.”

Susan Lekoff, PhD

Harvard Medical School

“I think that being connected and remaining connected is probably one of the most important things a person can do to try to have a successful or to try to have a positive old age.”

Narrator

Intellectual stimulation that is facilitated by belonging to a community can help vitalize one’s quality of life - as we age.

Catherine Tomeo

Violinist

“I think community is very physical and very spiritual. It’s life. That’s what life is: community.”

Narrator

The truth is not everyone has family, and late in life, friends and loved ones pass away. But that doesn't mean the end to a happy life. Up next, meet one woman who found the answer to keeping her later years golden.

Narrator

One of the most difficult experiences to face as we age can be the loss of a spouse. Meet Florence Keesely, everyone calls her Flossie. Her husband passed away in 1999.

Flossie Keesely

90 Years Old

“The difficulty was that I had nobody to share it with me. I have no brothers, no sisters, no children, no family. But you know, you get a strength when you need it.”

Susan Lekoff, PhD

Harvard Medical School

“People tend to become socially isolated as they age. It's for very understandable reasons. As people age, they often lose their, people die, their spouses might die, they might relocate to another environment to be closer to their children but then they're losing the friends they've had in their earlier life. They lose their connections they've had at work for all of the years that they'd been in a working situation. So those kinds of changes are really very important ones that people can try and prepare for, and try to protect against the feelings of isolation that might result.”

Narrator

Flossie found her strength in keeping both physically and intellectually fit. She swims. She volunteers her time as an organizer and fundraiser for worthy causes.

The Habilitation Center in Boca Raton, Florida provides comprehensive educational and vocational training to more than two hundred mentally and physically challenged adults.

Flossie Keesely

90 Years Old

“They have a big workshop and the handicapped go there and work with their hands, making phones and things. But, when they built it I was on the board when they were first raising money to build a building. It used to be a little old warehouse down here in Boca and we raised \$3-million dollars in a year's time to get this building out there.”

Narrator

Today, the Habilitation Center complex sits on ten acres, including a busy seven acre commercial nursery staffed by the centers client's. Proceeds from the nursery and the factory fund much of the center's day-to-day operational expenses.

Her inspiration is everywhere.

Flossie Keesely

90 Years Old

“There isn’t a day that goes by that I don’t want to do something. It’s not always going out. Sometimes it’s just putting pictures in a book or writing a letter or whatever. I find something to do everyday.”

Narrator

Being old does not mean living old. Crossing generations can help keep us connected to a wider community.

Flossie Keesely

90 Years Old

“I’ve been very fortunate, really. I’ve had friends of all ages. I mean there’s nobody specially that I have to be with. I had a birthday party yesterday and I had some ladies there that I’ve known for 50 years, and yet I had people there that I’ve only known a short time, and that’s been all my life. I think it’s a good secret to keep yourself, just not your own age. I mean having younger people in your life as well as younger people having older people in their lives.”

Flossie Keesely: “As some of you know it’s my birthday, now in case there’s somebody here that doesn’t know my age, just ask the person sitting next to you. Don’t ask me because I don’t know how old I am.”

Narrator

There is an old saying that 40 is the old age of youth and 50 is the youth of old age. Times are changing, as they always do. Exciting new medicines and a renewed understanding of the importance of diet and exercise and healthful habits, means we need to rethink how we live life after the traditional retirement age of 65.

Narrator

Golf.

Tai Chi instructor: “get down, open up and set it up and drop the elbows before you start to turn back up.”

Narrator

And Tai Chi are popular forms of exercise for the old and young alike. But a fall can put an end to that. Since more than seventy percent of all falls occur at home here’s a room-by-room way to reduce the risk of falling.

THE PATIENT CHANNEL PRESENTS – Healthy Aging

- *Make sure that you have good bright lighting in your home. Use night-lights in your bedroom, hall and bathroom
- *Make sure rugs are firmly fastened to the floor or use nonskid backing
- *Move electrical cords so they are not lying on the floor in walking areas
- *Put handrails in your bathroom for bath, shower and toilet use.
- *Stairs - always use handrails for support on the stairs and make sure stairs are well lit.

Susan Lekoff, PhD

Harvard Medical School

“At any age one might want to start thinking about making sure they’re going to be in the best possible condition both physically as well as mentally when they’re in their older years.”

Narrator

A realistic, enjoyable diet that is balanced in calories and nutrients, reasonable daily exercise, avoidance of cigarettes, moderate alcohol intake, practical, long- term financial planning, accessible and satisfying medical care and sustained, challenging intellectual stimulation – are all attainable.

These are the cornerstones that will help achieve and maintain a healthful and graceful old age. Such information can come from your doctor, from any number of books or websites, or maybe even from a wise older friend whose quality of life you admire.

Catherine Tomeo

Violinist

“I think people should look into their physical health and mental health at 30. I think you should start thinking about it then. You might not act on it as much as you need to when you’re 50, but you should be aware that that’s going to happen down the road.”

Robert Moser, MD

Exec. V.P. Emeritus/Am. College of Physicians

“The earlier the better, but it’s never too late to start.”

Narrator

And that’s the key; it’s never too late to start getting connected to your community, doing some volunteer work, making some new friends...taking care of your health so that it stays with you as you age.

End Credits:

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The AGS Foundation for Health in Aging at:

www.healthinaging.com

**Healthy Center for Chronic Disease
Prevention and Health Promotion at:**

www.cdc.gov/aging/

American Association of Retired People at:

www.aarp.org

- **For more information on this or any other health related topic please visit our website at:**

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