

Queen's professor urges health research to focus on the positive

February 29 2012

Political Studies professor Colin Farrelly wants to see more research into remarkable examples of health – such as why some people live 100 years disease-free.

He describes the current pathology-based approach that emphasizes what causes specific diseases as "negative biology" and suggest more resources should be focused on "positive biology."

"Currently the medical sciences presume that answering the question 'what causes disease?' is the most significant question to ask and answer," says Professor Farrelly. "Positive biology encourages us to invest just as much time, energy and resources into understanding the causes of [health](#) and happiness. This more balanced approach might lead to significant medical breakthroughs."

His research is currently focused on aging and longevity, an area he says is underfunded and often misunderstood. One of his recent papers urges the scientific community to address the obstacles facing researchers studying the biology of aging, because this research could help us learn how to slow the process down.

"Periodically we should stand back and consider the possibility that the questions we are trying the hardest to answer (such as what causes disease) are perhaps not the most important questions to answer."

Professor Farrelly's papers were recently published in *EMBO Reports* and

Journals of Gerontology and are part of a current book length project.

Provided by Queen's University

Citation: Queen's professor urges health research to focus on the positive (2012, February 29)
retrieved 5 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-02-queen-professor-urges-health-focus.html>

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