

## SPECIAL REPORT

## A Potential Decline in Life Expectancy in the United States in the 21st Century

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### SUMMARY

Forecasts of life expectancy are an important component of public policy that influence age-based

a similar method but different assumptions to arrive at a projected life expectancy of 100 years for males and females in most countries by the year 2300.<sup>7</sup> The Social Security Administration (SSA) ar-

***What does this say about our present state of health? Why are we witnessing the forecast of a decline in life expectancy in the next generation in the face of being the most medicated society the world has ever seen?***

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relative to this historical pattern, and gains in life expectancy at older ages are now much smaller than they were in previous decades.<sup>5</sup>

How much higher can life expectancy rise? This is not just an academic question. The answer formulated today will have substantial influence on the rate at which taxes are levied and on the potential solvency of age-entitlement programs. Some scientists answer this question by extrapolating from historical trends, which has led to the recent prediction that life expectancy at birth will rise to 100 years in the United States and other developed nations by the year 2060.<sup>6</sup> The United Nations used

as opposed to rising exponentially after puberty, which is common among humans and most other animals. This last point is important because it is the only "biologic" justification offered for the decision to raise forecasts of life expectancy.

Life-extending technology that might lead to much higher life expectancies does not yet exist and, should it be developed, must be widely implemented before it would influence statistics on population levels. We believe that potential forms of technology do not justify developing or revising forecasts of life expectancy. Extrapolation models fail to consider the health status of people currently