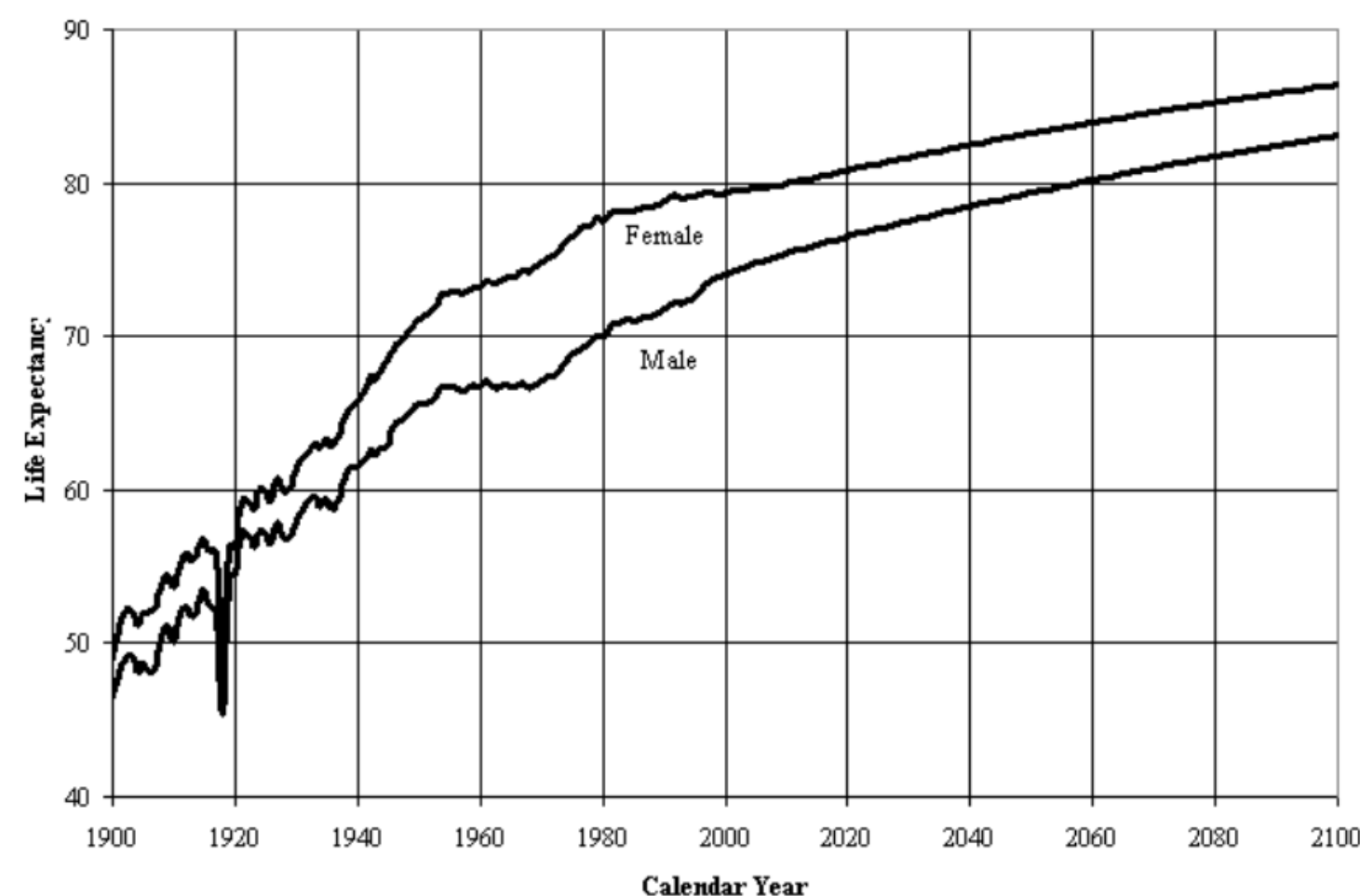


Abstract

Whether the alluring tales of vampires or the alchemic study on the elixir of life, humans have always dreamt of living forever. It is no surprise, therefore, that the species has turned to technology to bring about more time on earth. Technological advancements in healthcare facilities are benefited by the advent of machines better equipped for monitoring and diagnosing physical conditions. This, coupled with new treatments like the 3-D printing of organs or stem cell research, results in a net increase in the human lifespan. We examine the ethical consequences associated with using such technologies to chase immortality, with particular focus on resultant damage to human mental health and established social norms in western civilization.

Introduction

- Human Life expectancies have ben on the rise since the turn of the 19th century.
- Men and women are living longer today in comparison to fifty years ago.
- It is projected that average life expectancy will continue to rise through 2050 and beyond

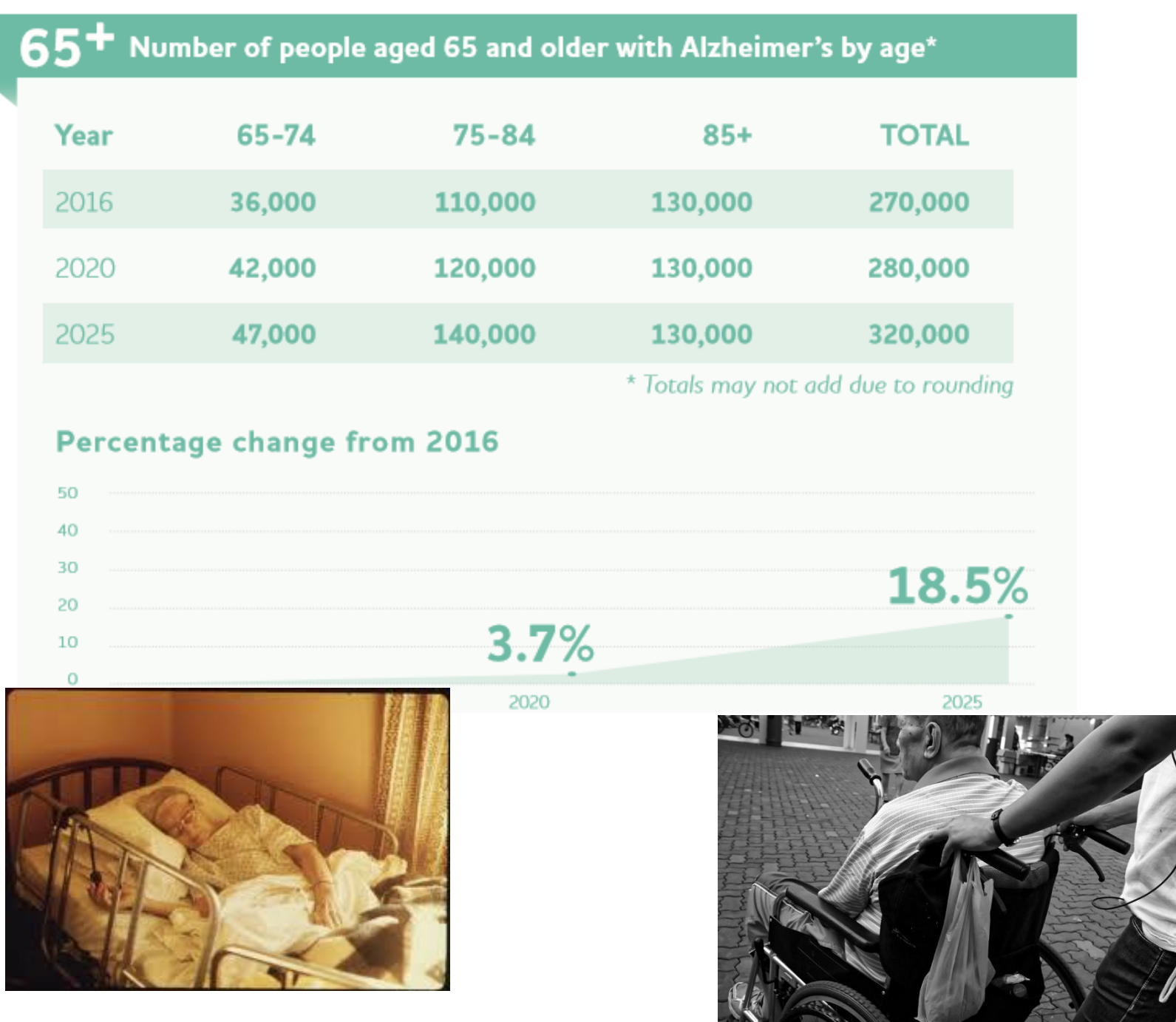


- Increases in lifespan are largely due to advancements in the biomedical capabilities of improved technology
- There is an inherent association with longer life to a happier life. The purpose of this research is to either prove or disprove said association

Methods

- For academic purposes it was chosen to use improved quality of life as the measurement for greater happiness. This was chosen because improved quality of life is not subject to emotional swings the way measuring happiness can be.
- Extrapolating and improving on a definition provided in author Lesnoff-Caravaglia’s book, “Values, Ethics, and Aging”, a happier life is a life where an individual can detect an improvement in their overall perceived quality of life.
- Measuring improved quality of life was looked at through upkeep of mental faculties in elderly patients, specifically diseases like alzheimers, as their lives are prolonged.

Results



- Diagnosis of alzheimers diseasae has increased along with, and due to, longer durations of the human lifespan. In fact:
- In data pulled from the Alzheimer’s Association, it is estimated that 5.4 million Americans, 2% of the total US population, over the age of 65 have been diagnosed with the disease. These numbers have been on the rise over the last few years, and it is estimated that by 2050, the number of Americans over the age of 65 diagnosed with the disease will triple to roughly 14 million people
- While many people believe that Alzheimer’s diagnosis has been on the rise due to improvements in the ability to identify the disease, it is important to note that such identification techniques are incapable of resulting in the estimated tripling projected by the Alzheimer’s Association.
- Alzheimers is a disease that crip[ples the minds ability to function, and therefore has a negative impact on improved quality of life.

Conclusion

- Prolonging life without regard to the limits of the human mind results in extending the suffering of our elderly; and as evidenced by the frightening increase in alzheimers diagnosis, degrades perceived quality of life and therefore overall human happiness.

Discussion

Future Implications on quality of life associated with continued life prolongation:

- Consumption of resources
- Delaying death obscures fear associated with it
- Implementation of more nursing homes

Future Implications of Prolonging life to “near immortal” status (theoretical):

- Loss of art and literature
- Would life be even worth living at that point?
- Loss of Human identity itself

- Gulliver’s travels picture

References

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Hours of Operation:

Monday – Friday
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.