

The Bad News and The Good News

by Dr. Dewey Heetderks

For the past thirty years I have been collecting urologically related bottles and ephemera. Yes, I am a urologist. My collection includes medicines for kidney and bladder disease, lithontriptics (stone dissolvers), aphrodisiacs and venereal disease nostrums.

A specific area of interest has been urological medicines that existed during the pontiled bottle era, i.e. around 1850 and before. Vaughn's Vegetable Lithontriptic Mixture - Buffalo and Cowan's Lithontriptic are the two known pontiled stone dissolvers that did exist. Dr. Magnin's Lucina Cordial or The Elixir of Love-Paris is the known pontiled aphrodisiac and a bottle that is labeled only, 4-11-44, is the pontiled nostrum for venereal disease. Although these bottles are scarce, there are several varieties of each.

However, when it comes to the kidney-bladder disease, there is only a single pontiled medicine that is known. It is a cure, Dr. J.R. Flander's Specific For Cure Of Disease Of The Kidneys and Stone In Bladder - New York (Figure 1-2). Today, only two such bottles are known to exist. But, why only one known pontiled kidney-bladder nostrum? Although kidney disease

was not infrequent, bladder and voiding complaints should have been a common problem. Prior to 1850 for comparison, there were approximately 100 different pontiled cures and over 1000 pontiled medicines for a wide variety of human complaints and illnesses. Also, significant is the fact, that after 1850 there were several hundred different smooth based medicines for kidney-bladder disease. So why is there one, and only one, pontiled nostrum for this problem?

A basic and primary cause for urologic complaint is partial urinary obstruction. Also, it is important to remember that such a disease problem usually worsens with age. The classic example is prostate enlargement, either benign or malignant. An additional consideration is the frequent presence of prostatic cancer, being the most common cancer in man. Again, such problems only worsen with aging of the patient, so that longevity of life becomes significant.

Today life expectancy is carefully followed among the nations of the world, and data have been collected for many years ¹ (Figure 3). If a man was born in the United States in 2001, he has a life expectancy of approximately 75.2 years.

In 1950 the life expectancy averaged 66 years and, in 1900, it averaged 48 years.

It is significant that in 1850 the life expectancy was only 38.3 years for males (Caucasian). In summing up, there was a marked decrease in the length of man's life ² (Figure 4-5).

Prior to 1850, man's very short life span was certainly a major contributing factor for the low incidence of kidney-bladder disease. The result was that urological pontiled medicines were rarely needed.

Of course some people were long lived, but, in general, life was physically strenuous, hazardous and relatively brief. The bad news was that life was brief, but the good news was you missed most of the urological problems.



Figure 1: Dr. J. R. Flander's Specific for Cure Of Disease Of The Kidneys and Stone In Bladder. The only kidney related nostrum sold prior to 1850.



Figure 2: Label reads: Mrs. Wood's Medicina The Greatest Remedy of the Day Prepared by Mrs. Sophia H. Woods Assisted by Mr. A.M. Woods, Gen'l Agent, 518 Grand St., New York City

References:

- ¹ WHO 1996. World health statistics annual, 1995. Geneva: World Health Organization.
- ² Department of Health and Human Services, National Center of Health Statistics; web: www.dhhs.gov.

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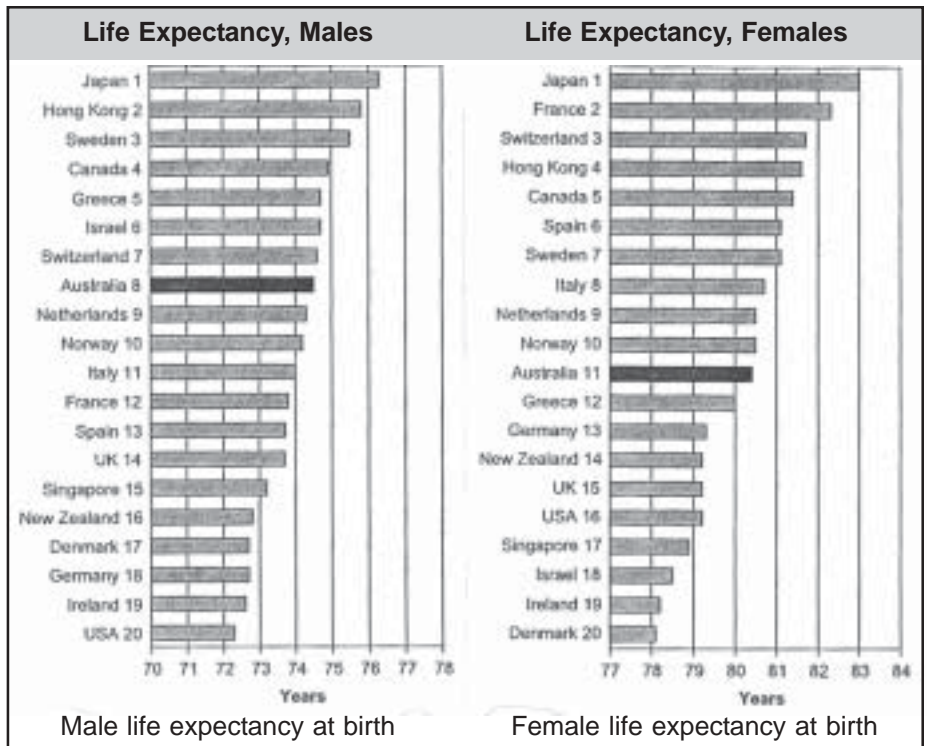


Figure 4: Life Expectancy by Age, 1850-2000

Calendar period	Age								
	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80
White males									
1850	38.3	48.0	40.1	34.0	27.9	21.6	15.6	10.2	5.9
1890	42.50	48.45	40.66	34.05	27.37	20.72	14.73	9.35	5.40
1900-1902	48.23	50.59	42.19	34.88	27.74	20.76	14.35	9.03	5.10
1909-1911	50.23	51.32	42.71	34.87	27.43	20.39	13.98	8.83	5.09
1919-1921	56.34	54.15	45.60	37.65	29.86	22.22	15.25	9.51	5.47
1929-1931	59.12	54.96	46.02	37.54	29.22	21.51	14.72	9.20	5.26
1939-1941	62.81	57.03	47.76	38.80	30.03	21.96	15.05	9.42	5.38
1949-1951	66.31	58.98	49.52	40.29	31.17	22.83	15.76	10.07	5.88
1959-1961	67.55	59.78	50.25	40.98	31.73	23.22	16.01	10.29	5.89
1969-1971	67.94	59.69	50.22	41.07	31.87	23.34	16.07	10.38	6.18
1979-1981	70.82	61.98	52.45	43.31	34.04	25.26	17.56	11.35	6.76
1990	72.7	63.5	54.0	44.7	35.6	26.7	18.7	12.1	7.1
1992	73.2	64.0	54.3	45.1	36.0	27.1	19.1	12.4	7.2
1993	73.1	63.8	54.2	44.9	35.9	27.0	18.9	12.3	7.1
1995	73.4	64.1	54.5	45.2	36.1	27.3	19.3	12.5	7.2
1997	74.3	65.0	55.3	45.9	36.7	27.7	19.6	12.7	7.4
1998	74.5	65.2	55.5	46.1	36.8	27.9	19.7	12.8	7.5
1999	74.6	65.3	55.6	46.2	36.9	28.0	19.8	12.9	7.5
2000	74.8	65.4	55.7	46.4	37.1	28.2	20.0	13.0	7.6
White females									
1850	40.5	47.2	40.2	35.4	29.8	23.5	17.0	11.3	6.4
1890	44.46	49.62	42.03	35.36	28.76	22.09	15.70	10.15	5.75
1900-1902	51.08	52.15	43.77	36.42	29.17	21.89	15.23	9.59	5.50
1909-1911	53.62	53.57	44.88	36.96	29.26	21.74	14.92	9.38	5.35
1919-1921	58.53	55.17	46.46	38.72	30.94	23.12	15.93	9.94	5.70
1929-1931	62.67	57.63	48.52	39.99	31.52	23.41	16.05	9.98	5.63
1939-1941	67.29	60.85	51.38	42.21	33.25	24.72	17.00	10.50	5.88
1949-1951	72.03	64.26	54.56	45.00	35.64	26.76	18.64	11.68	6.59
1959-1961	74.19	66.05	56.29	46.63	37.13	28.08	19.69	12.38	6.67
1969-1971	75.49	66.97	57.24	47.60	38.12	29.11	20.79	13.37	7.59
1979-1981	78.22	69.21	59.44	49.76	40.16	30.96	22.45	14.89	8.65
1990	79.4	70.1	60.3	50.6	41.0	31.6	23.0	15.4	9.0
1992	79.8	70.4	60.6	50.9	41.2	31.9	23.2	15.6	9.2
1993	79.5	70.1	60.3	50.6	41.0	31.7	23.0	15.3	8.9
1995	79.6	70.2	60.4	50.6	41.0	31.7	23.0	15.4	8.9
1997	79.9	70.5	60.7	50.9	41.3	32.0	23.2	15.5	9.1
1998	80.0	70.6	60.8	51.0	41.4	32.0	23.3	15.6	9.1
1999	79.9	70.5	60.6	50.9	41.3	31.9	23.2	15.5	9.0
2000	80.0	70.5	60.7	50.9	41.3	32.0	23.2	15.5	9.1
All other males									
1900-1902	32.54	41.90	35.11	29.25	23.12	17.34	12.62	8.33	5.12
1909-1911	34.05	40.65	33.46	27.33	21.57	16.21	11.67	8.00	5.53
1919-1921	47.14	45.99	38.36	32.51	26.53	20.47	14.74	9.58	5.83
1929-1931	47.55	44.27	35.95	29.45	23.36	17.92	13.15	8.78	5.42
1939-1941	52.33	48.54	39.74	32.25	25.23	19.18	14.38	10.06	6.46
1949-1951	58.91	52.96	43.73	35.31	27.29	20.25	14.91	10.74	7.07
1959-1961	61.48	55.19	45.78	37.05	28.72	21.28	15.29	10.81	6.87
1969-1971	60.98	53.67	44.37	36.20	28.29	21.24	15.35	10.68	7.57
1979-1981	65.63	57.40	47.87	39.13	30.64	22.92	16.54	11.36	7.22
1990	67.0	58.5	49.0	40.3	31.9	23.9	17.0	11.4	7.0

The expectation of life at a specified age is the average number of years that member of a hypothetical group of people of the same age would continue to live if they were subject throughout the remainder of their lives to the same mortality rate.