Biologists Use Engineering Technique to Learn More About Human Aging

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Methods used for studying the aging of complex equipment can be used to better understand the aging of humans, according to biologists, who say our bodies function best at about 10 years old and if we could hold that rate we may live to be 5,000.

The quest to understand and control aging has led University of Chicago biologists Leonid Gavrilov and Natalia Gavrilova to draw inspiration from what might seem an unlikely source: reliability engineering.

The reliability-engineering approach to understanding aging is based on ideas, methods, and models borrowed from reliability theory. Developed in the late 1950s to describe the failure and aging of complex electrical and electronic equipment, reliability theory has been greatly improved over the last several decades. It allows researchers to predict how a system with a specified architecture and level of reliability of the constituent parts will fail over time.

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