

# Existing Evidence Shows Radiation Accelerates Aging

"Existing evidence . . . strongly supports the view that radiation accelerates aging," according to Dr. Herman T. Blumenthal, who has been researching the phenomenon of aging for the past twenty years.

Writing in the current issue of SCIENTIST AND CITIZEN, Dr. Blumenthal states that "chromosomal changes similar to those seen in 'natural' aging also occur in irradiated individuals."

Dr. Blumenthal finds that "assessing the aging effects of radiation in man is particularly difficult because of the necessarily long period of observation, but in other mammals the evidence is rather convincing." Laboratory experiments with irradiated mice have shown significant accelerations in cancer and other important age-related diseases.

Dr. Blumenthal cites three human populations which can (and should) "be studied intensively for possible life-shortening effects of radiation, because of particularly heavy exposures:

"One of these ... is the Japanese who survived the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, particularly those who were then in their infancy." (Dr. Blumenthal notes that "the acceleration of onset of cancers in persons exposed during the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings is now well established").

Another group which should

be studied "is the Eskimo who have experienced relatively high exposures from weapons tests carried out between 1949 and 1961."

"Still a third group includes those (Utah and Nevada residents) exposed to high levels of iodine 131 from weapons tests carried out between 1949 and 1961," Dr. Blumenthal states, noting that "a recent study of the Utah group has revealed a twofold increase in thyroiditis and an almost fourfold increase in thyroid cancer."

Dr. Blumenthal, a gerontology research associate in biopsychology at Washington University In St. Louis, is a founder of the Committee for Nuclear Information and a member of its Scientific Division.