Forever young?

Scientific discoveries and ethical issues surrounding eternal youth

February 5, 2013 - 3.00 pm
SISSA, Main Lecture Hall
Via Bonomea 265, Trieste

At a public conference to be held at the International School for Advanced Studies (SISSA), Mauro Giacca, molecular biologist and director of the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) in Trieste, will review the state-of-the-art of research into the mechanisms of ageing, and discuss the ethical implications raised by extending the average life span of human beings.
The obsessive quest for a permanently smooth skin and a long and healthy life at any cost seems to be the stuff of Hollywood stars, or perhaps a neurosis of the last few decades, but the myth of eternal youth and immortality dates back to the very origins of human culture. The real difference is that people today no longer invoke the gods or magic potions. Today it's science that can truly disclose the secret of longevity.

“There are still many limits. For example, we still don’t understand how the maximum life span of a species is determined genetically and why there is such as difference in life span among the various species”, explains Mauro Giacca, molecular biologist and director of ICGEB in Trieste. “What we are starting to understand, though, is how the body’s genes and molecules regulate the ageing process. For example, certain genetic mutations have been found to extend the life span of mice, worms and flies. Mechanisms have just been discovered that link oxygen to ageing. Stem cells can rejuvenate organs. These are just a few of the discoveries researchers have made in the past few years”. Giacca will be addressing this topic at a public conference to be held in the Main Lecture Hall of SISSA, on February 5 at 3.00 pm.

“My talk will not be limited to listing the most recent discoveries and future prospects in this field”, he concludes. “It will also be an opportunity to consider the ethical issues that this future of eternal youth raises.”

The conference is open to the public and will be held in English.

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**IMAGE:**

- Credits: Justin Vidamo (http://bit.ly/1a74ayB)

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