

Putting death on hold for 5,000 years...*The Times*

By Alan Hamilton

Forget the three score years and ten, the adverts for stairlifts, glucosamine sulphate and walk-in baths. Science will one day have the power to let you live for 5,000 years.

Delegates to an anti-ageing conference in London yesterday heard that genetic engineering, cloning, drug miniaturization, synthetic skin, artificial muscles and even artificial intelligence provide the possibility of extending the length and quality of life far beyond present limits.

More than 350 people from 20 countries, mainly doctors and scientists, heard the life-extending message from two pioneers of the anti-ageing industry. They are, almost inevitably, American.

Doctors Ronald Klatt and Robert Goldman work in Chicago, and claim that they are on a par with sports doctors whose aim is to prevent disease rather than treat it.

Dr. Goldman, chairman of the American Academy of Anti-Ageing Medicine and founding president of the US National Academy of Sports Medicine, said: "Anti-ageing medicine is not a magic pill, potion or quick fix. It is a detailed scientific approach."

Dr. Goldman, admitting that he and his colleagues worked in a controversial area said: "There is no limit to where we can go with focus, determination and discussion, and what we are doing."

Despite the protestations of the promoters, it would have been difficult to confuse the meeting with a seminar of the Royal College of Physicians. Not only was Dr. Goldman's lecture illustrated with pictures of the Bionic Woman, an actress turned up to unzip her trousers.

Brigitte Nielsen, 41, revealed a hip emblazoned with the tattoo "Mattia", the name of her Italian boyfriend. "He is 26 years old and I need to keep up," she said. "It is important to eat well and stay healthy, and I'm here to pick up some suggestions."

Dr. Aubrey de Grey, a biogerontologist at Cambridge University and a speaker at the conference, said he was there to lend "proportion" to the occasion, admitting that his academic colleagues often steered clear of such seminars, but even he believed that scientific advances could lead to the human life span being extended to anything between 130 and 5,000 years.

"Many people here are medics and are interested in things we can do now; I am interested in things we cannot do yet," he said.

Accompanying the conference is an exhibition of products, juices and technical gadgets that claim to deter the ageing process. The conference has so far failed to come to terms with the side-effects of living to be 5,000; how many Christmas repeats of *The Sound of Music* can the human mind actually endure?

