



Fantastic Voyage: A Voyage Worth Taking

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Review of Ray Kurzweil and Terry Grossman, M.D.'s *Fantastic Voyage: Live Long Enough to Live Forever* (Rodale, 2004)

"Immortality is within our grasp" is emblazoned across the back of the book, which borrows its title from an Isaac Asimov novel. There are even some similarities between the two; miniaturization in the original allowed humans to travel inside of a researcher's body, and nanotechnology in the new book will allow patients to intake miniscule machinery that can fix what ails them on a cellular, even molecular, level.

The book discusses three levels of advancement. Level one is what we currently have available to us, while levels two and three, biotech and nanotech-AI respectively, represent where things will eventually go. As the subtitle "Live long enough to live forever" suggests, the book's primary focus is on the first level, teaching what an individual can do to survive long enough to allow the development of both the second and third advancement levels.

What the book does well is to break down the myriad biological processes that contribute to aging. It puts things into terms that are easy to understand for the lay reader, and the discussion of the problem usually leads into a discussion of what a person can do today to curtail the damage as much as possible. It talks about many common health afflictions of our time, such as diabetes, heart disease, and inflammation, and offers up suggestions for how to best deal with, or better yet prevent, these conditions. The book also suggests seeking the help of a dedicated, licensed medical professional when deciding to make lifestyle changes (if your current professional does not share your "enthusiasm" for health, then you should consult another).

The overall theme of the book is correct lifestyle choice. The book wisely suggests that most people will take bits and pieces from this and that section to use in their daily routine. It provides a plethora of lifestyle choices for the ambitious life extension

enthusiast to employ to live long enough to live forever. Choices in food and drink are discussed; it even details the optimal pH of drinking water.

Supplementation is another topic treated at length; in addition to the recommended daily allowance (RDA) of vitamins and minerals provided by the FDA, the book also provides its own optimum daily allowance (ODA) of these nutrients. It also talks about several other supplements to add to the regime, as well as hormones and how to turn them to your advantage and also an effective exercise routine. It also talks about the importance of reducing stress.

The book also makes frequent reference to its website, www.fantastic-voyage.net. The resources tab is full of great information; there is a great glycemic index list, in addition to a link to the American College for Advanced Medicine's find-a-doctor page. There is a link to the Frontier Institute, run by co-author Terry Grossman, M.D. It also provides links to purchase many of the products talked about in the book. Sometimes the website can seem to be over-referenced, as if the book were trying to pitch the website to sell products, but overall the website is a useful resource, and the product links are nice for those who would like to obtain them, but aren't too web-savvy.

The biggest problem I find with the book and the concept are the costs involved; longevity isn't cheap. With water ionizers alone ringing in at between \$700-1,200, some of the ideas expressed, valid and compelling as they may be, will not be within monetary range of those who want to follow them. This is something that could become an even bigger problem when level two and three technologies come around; as important as it is to bring these technologies to fruition, it's equally important that they be accessible to the general public, or the only ones telling Death where he can shove his sickle will be the very wealthy.

I would definitely recommend this book, as I feel that there will be something in it for most everyone. I also feel that the book brings into focus questions that we, as a society, will have to deal with in the coming quarter to half century, and the sooner we can create intelligent dialogue on a global scale about them, the better off we'll all be.