

## Secrets of the Oldest Old

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With the help of 40 international correspondents on a volunteer basis, the Gerontology Research Group (GRG), affiliated with the Molecular Biology Institute at UCLA in Los Angeles, has maintained a set of tables of the world's oldest people for the last 12 years. Table E, a list of world-wide validated living supercentenarians (persons 110 years or older) can be found on our website ([www.grg.org](http://www.grg.org)). We currently list 70 supercentenarians (66 women and 4 men). Because of the rigorous process we employ, the GRG is now recognized as the world authority for accurate data about human longevity, including *Guinness Book of World Records*, *Wikipedia*, the TV media, and by various wire services (*AP*, *UPI*, *Reuters*, *CNN*, etc.), considering all the false or exaggerated claims that were commonplace in earlier decades. The GRG requires at least three pieces of independent documentation to establish the claim of any applicant. Our correspondents translate foreign-language birth and baptismal records and marriage certificates into English, usually written in beautiful penmanship in their original language.

After dozens of interviews and life history questionnaires, we noted that our supercentenarians have virtually nothing in common except for having long-lived first-degree relatives. Having now established the principle that "longevity is inherited," the GRG in collaboration with the Supercentenarian Research Foundation (SRF) and the Stanford University Medical School has undertaken an IRB-approved protocol to examine the complete DNA sequences of as many supercentenarians as possible. Having identified a variety of longevity-determining genes as well as non-coding sequences, we expect to publish our results at the beginning of next year in a peer-reviewed medical journal. We expect that these discoveries will have significant implications for the longevity of ordinary people in the future and not just for our special population.