2.2 How is Aging Viewed in the Medical Field?

2.2.1 Two Surveys of the Medical Perception of Aging

How is the relationship between aging and disease perceived in the medical establishment? We were unable to identify any studies addressing this issue specifically. However, two studies analyse the concept of disease more broadly and include the question of the status of aging, and therefore give some indication of the medical perception of aging.[1,21] It is worth noting that neither study deals with the linguistics, *i.e.* no study distinguishes the different meanings of aging (*e.g.* maturation *vs.* senescence).

2.2.1.1 BMJ Vote on the Top 'Non-Diseases'

In 2002, the British Medical Journal (BMJ) ran a poll to identify the most widely recognized *non-diseases*. Non-disease was defined as "a human process or problem that some have defined as a medical condition but where people may have better outcomes if the problem or process was not defined in that way."[21]

The BMJ is ranked fifth amongst general medical journals. It targets doctors, researchers and other health professionals,[22] thereby addressing the core medical field. For the survey, the editorial board and journal readers brainstormed nearly 200 conditions potentially qualifying as non-diseases. Then, 570 people voted on whether a particular condition was a non-disease. Among these, aging ranked first, constituting the top non-disease (Table 2.2). This is striking considering the presence of other, clearly non-pathological conditions like work (2rd place) or boredom (3rd place).

One may argue that the survey format is likely to miss differing opinions on the classification of aging for several reasons. Firstly, of the 570 participants only 271 (44%) believed aging was a non-disease. Perhaps the remaining 56% disagree with aging as the top non-disease. However, whilst keeping this possibility in mind, the fact that aging is the most frequently identified non-disease is a strong indication of the prevailing notions in the medical field. Secondly, and most importantly, the BMJ definition of non-disease is not saying "this state is not a disease". Instead, the poll asked for conditions

Table 2.2 Top 20 non-diseases in descending order of *non-diseaseness*.[21]

1 Aging	11 Childbirth
2 Work	12 Allergy to the 21st century
3 Boredom	13 Jet lag
4 Bags under eyes	14 Unhappiness
5 Ignorance	15 Cellulite
6 Baldness	16 Hangover
7 Freckles	17 Anxiety about penis size/penis envy
8 Big ears	18 Pregnancy
9 Grey or white hair	19 Road rage
10 Ugliness	20 Loneliness