Science Podcast Script

What follows death? Despite the many answers for this question, most people accept dying as an unavoidable part of life. However, there lives a radical movement that rejects the very idea of death: Cryonics.

[Play Robert Ettinger clip]

In 1962, Robert Ettinger devised the idea to preserve the human body after death with ultra-low temperatures. His hope was that future scientific progress would eventually allow for the reanimation of these quote unquote, corpsicles.

[Play icy sound somewhere in explanation above]

Cryonicists use liquid nitrogen to achieve temperatures close to -196 degrees Celsius. Here, biochemical reactions that would normally lead to cell death are effectively stopped.

Max More is the president of the Alcor Life Extension Foundation, one of the largest cryonics institutions in the world. Like many others in his field, More believes the very concept of death is outdated in light of this frigid technology.

[Play Alcor clip]

Due to its extreme nature, the cryonics movement has unsurprisingly received criticism from the scientific community.

A recurring argument perceives cryonics as a selfish act, when money could be used far better for other issues, such as cancer research.

Critics also point to the issue of overpopulation.

Naturalists warn that as many as 50% of species living today may be extinct by 2100 owing to human activities.

Should human longevity jeopardize the existence of other species?

Other skeptics have egalitarian concerns.

The Alcor Life Extension Foundation charges $80,000 for cryopreservation of the head and $200,000 for the full body.

These prices lead some to view cryonics as the sole privilege of the wealthy.

Additionally, some reject the notion that science could even allow for reanimation in a feasible timeframe:

[Play Skeptic clip]

Despite the uncertainty and skepticism surrounding cryopreservation, many have found hope in this movement.

The High Court in the United Kingdom approved cryopreservation for a 14-year-old suffering with terminal cancer.

In her words, “I want to live and live longer and I think that in the future they might ﬁnd a cure for my cancer and wake me up. I want to have this chance.”

That’s all the cryonics movement offers, really: a chance.

No matter the likelihood of success, institutions like Alcor relieve people of death anxiety by providing a chance. A chance at a second life.