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Welcome to the Journal of Evolution and Health

Abstract

Welcome to the first issue of the *Journal of Evolution and Health*! The *Journal of Evolution and Health* is the peer-reviewed, open-access journal of the [Ancestral Health Society](#), a community of scientists, healthcare professionals, and laypersons who collaborate to understand health challenges from an evolutionary perspective.

Keywords

welcome letter, mission

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the first issue of the ***Journal of Evolution and Health***! The ***Journal of Evolution and Health*** is the peer-reviewed, open-access journal of the [Ancestral Health Society](#), a community of scientists, healthcare professionals, and laypersons who collaborate to understand health challenges from an evolutionary perspective.

The Society promotes collaboration through two initiatives:

- The [Ancestral Health Symposium](#) is held annually in August and is the premier event of the ancestral health movement. If you are interested in understanding human health, wellness, and disease from an evolutionary perspective, please join us!
- The [Journal of Evolution and Health](#) is a peer-reviewed open-access journal serving academic researchers and clinical practitioners. The ***Journal*** seeks to cultivate interdisciplinary collaboration to develop and test evolutionary approaches to health.

In both the ***Symposium*** and the ***Journal***, the Society is motivated by a belief that evolution has much to teach us about healthful living and effective healing.

The ***Journal's*** mission is to bring academic researchers from a broad range of disciplines together with clinical practitioners and laypeople to cultivate an evolutionary perspective on health.

In the ***Journal's*** pages, you will find explorations into how evolution has shaped and constrained human and animal biology, new insights based on the latest science into the major factors affecting health, and translation of those insights into practical methods for improving human and animal health.

We recognize that knowledge relevant to the ***Journal's*** mission is dispersed across many academic and clinical disciplines. The ***Journal of Evolution and Health*** is therefore an interdisciplinary publication that seeks contributions from a broad range of sources and seeks to promote communication among scholars and clinicians. The ***Journal of Evolution and Health*** aims to build an interdisciplinary community of theorists, experimental researchers, clinicians, and laypersons who are united by an evolutionary perspective and who collaborate to develop and test improved methods of healing and living.

The scope of the Journal is broad. Disciplines represented include (but are not limited to):

- Anthropology
- Biology & Biochemistry
- Biomedical sciences such as neuroscience, microbiology, and immunology
- Evolutionary biology, ecology, and genetics
- Psychology
- Dietary and Nutritional Science
- Physiology and Exercise Science
- Public Health
- Public policy
- History and social sciences of diet and health
- Medicine
- Veterinary medicine

Each of these disciplines addresses aspects of the Journal's mission. The evolutionary forces shaping human and animal nature are explored by **anthropologists, evolutionary biologists, ecologists, geneticists, and evolutionary psychologists**. Major factors impacting human health – diet, lifestyle and physical activity, infectious disease, and gene variants – are subject to evolutionary selection, and are studied by the fields of **food science and nutrition, physiology and exercise science, microbiology and immunology, and evolutionary biology and genetics**. To be translated into clinical practice, evolutionary insights must be taken up by **psychologists, medical doctors, alternative medical practitioners, and veterinarians**. Finally, the field of **public health** synthesizes a wide array of factors affecting health, and **public policy** exercises considerable influence over public health, medical practice, and dietary guidelines. **Historians** can address the history of health and of factors influencing health such as diet and lifestyle; **social scientists** and **psychologists** may helpfully address social factors that influence health, such as stress, development, and relationships.

Through the Society, the *Journal of Evolution and Health* has intimate connections to the fast-growing Ancestral Health community. The ability of an ancestral diet and lifestyle to improve human health has been experienced by millions; yet the reasons why ancestral approaches work and the precise parameters of an optimal way of eating and living remain poorly understood. The *Journal* expects that the experiences of Ancestral Health community members will provide a rich reservoir of case studies that can help generate insights into the causes of ill health and the parameters of natural therapies.

Indeed, the ultimate purpose of the *Journal of Evolution and Health* is to advance a reconsideration of the best approach to problems of health and optimal living. Modern medicine has become dependent on drugs, surgeries, and medical devices; insurers and hospitals insist that doctors comply with a standard of care that mandates such interventions; and health-related research often focuses exclusively on developing new technologies. Such a focus would be understandable if a pharmaceutical-drug-and-surgery approach to medicine had proven its worth, but such interventions have compiled a mediocre record of health improvement. In recent years, life expectancy has stagnated, and incidence of some diseases, including obesity, diabetes, and brain and digestive illnesses, has increased. Medicine and biomedical research, as conventionally practiced, offer little insight into the causes of these shifts in public health.

A doubling of human life expectancy occurred before the advent of modern medicine, beginning about 1860 and largely completed by about 1950, driven by improvements in diet and hygiene that reduced infectious disease mortality. A plausible argument set forth by Paul Ewald holds that microbes evolved reduced virulence in response to hygiene improvements like flush toilets, sewage systems, and automobile transport.

Extrapolating from these past experiences, it may plausibly be argued that the greatest future advances in health will come through improvements in diet, lifestyle, and environment; and that understanding these opportunities will require an evolutionary perspective. It was from this logic that the modern Ancestral Health movement was born. The movement, initiated by a few scholars and bloggers, has grown into an international scale with millions of adherents. This groundswell culminated in the organization of first annual Ancestral Health Symposium held at UCLA in August, 2011. Subsequent symposia have followed, one at Harvard Law School in Cambridge in 2012, and the most recent in Atlanta in 2013. These symposia brought together academics, health care professionals, and the public to collaborate and communicate about the human ecological niche and modern health from an evolutionary perspective to develop solutions to our current health challenges.

In the ***Journal of Evolution and Health***, an evolutionary perspective will be applied to the challenge of finding dietary, lifestyle, and environmental methods of preventing ill health and treating disease. We believe well-designed dietary, lifestyle, and environmental interventions may supersede conventional therapeutics or at least reduce the need for them.

The ***Journal of Evolution and Health*** is peer reviewed. Peer review can significantly improve the quality of papers. Because the ***Journal of Evolution and Health*** seeks to integrate knowledge across multiple disciplines to achieve new insights, and few authors can be knowledgeable in all the fields which touch upon problems as broad in scope as evolution and health, we believe that peer review has an especially valuable role in the Journal's editorial process. Nevertheless, peer review is limited and imperfect. To augment the peer-review processes, the ***Journal*** welcomes critical analysis of published manuscripts in the form of letters or commentary. We seek to incorporate into the ***Journal*** one of the greatest strengths of the online community of blogs and other social media; open commentary.

All articles in the ***Journal of Evolution of Health*** are open access. Because the ***Journal's*** goal is to build a community and sponsor collaboration among experts from a broad range of disciplines, open access is an essential element of the Journal's editorial policy.

The ***Journal of Evolution and Health*** welcomes these article types:

- **Research Articles** present original research in one or more scholarly disciplines.
- **Clinical Articles** discuss causes of disease and treatment methods for diseases, including methods for eliminating causes. They are directed at an audience of clinical practitioners.
- **Case Studies** present case histories and similar anecdotes that may illuminate an aspect of clinical practice.
- **Popular Articles** present lay perspectives; often they will draw upon personal experience and apply scholarly or clinical ideas.
- **Reviews** are expert overviews of the literature of a specific field directed largely toward specialists within that field or closely related disciplines. They should seek to present a balanced view of issues on which there is no scholarly consensus.
- **Perspectives** are expert overviews of a problem or issue that are directed toward a broad interdisciplinary audience. Perspectives should give outsiders insight into issues within a specific field. They may provide an idiosyncratic or opinionated view of issues.
- **Letters** are non-peer-reviewed communications to the journal which the editors believe have sufficient merit to deserve publication.
- **Commentaries** are peer-reviewed opinion pieces that are intended to stimulate discussion and debate on important issues or open scientific and medical questions.
- **Comments** are peer-reviewed responses or commentaries on a published paper that previously appeared in the ***Journal of Evolution and Health***, and serve to foster ongoing open peer review.

We invite you, scholars, clinicians, and the interested public, to submit original scholarship to the ***Journal of Evolution and Health***, and to participate in the growth of the Ancestral Health community.

Cheers!

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Editors-in-Chief,
Journal of Evolution and Health