

## The Mission of Maya and Methuselah: A Medical Guide for Aging in Place

**Karen Marie Humphreys**

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*Realistic about the challenges of growing older, The Mission of Maya and Methuselah aims to equip those who are unprepared for the inadequacies of global health-care systems with thorough knowledge.*

Written for people aged forty and over, Karen Marie Humphreys's insightful social science survey *The Mission of Maya and Methuselah* argues that Canada's health-care systems are not equipped to meet the growing need for long-term elder care.

Asserting that long-term care and assisted living facilities are overburdened but that the number of people who will need them in the coming years is growing nonetheless, the book addresses the nature of the problem by pointing to systemic issues. It cites research regarding increasing economic instability of families; the numbers of grown children still living with their parents; the lack of time, space, and skills necessary to provide adequate care for elderly people; and insufficient access to primary care for their contributions to creating an untenable situation.

But the book also counters its stark realities with the encouraging suggestion that while aging is inevitable, frailty need not be. It decries pervading beliefs about the inevitability of some aspects of aging: "Society believes and accepts that becoming weak or frail is expected ... I am here to tell you it is not." And it shares hopeful guidance for preparing for one's later years, as with its tips for aging in place, frailty prevention, and facing health, fitness, functionality, and financial issues.

Self-assessment tools are present to help forestall potential issues, and the text makes use of illustrations including footnotes, diagrams, and charts to make its more complex information accessible. The topics of geriatric care and end-of-life planning are also covered, rounding this work out. Indeed, the book's practical advice will prove useful for readers of a wide range of ages.

While the book is dense with information and includes some quite didactic sections, these are tempered by personable stories about Humphreys's own struggles with weight and fitness. It also models what life can look like for people at different life stages, with the guiding example of how middle-aged "Maya" and nonagenarian "Methuselah" might cope. Its general tone is encouraging, despite some stern admonitions to take action now.

An insider's account of challenges within Canadian eldercare systems, *The Mission of Maya and Methuselah: A Medical Guide for Aging in Place* couples hard insights with guidance for aging in one's own home and community.

KRISTINE MORRIS (February 6, 2024)

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