

## **Fed: Married men live longer, but not women: new study**

By Janelle Miles, National Medical Correspondent

BRISBANE, March 18 AAP - Marriage may add almost a year to a man's life, but it does little to boost the lifespan of women, Australian researchers have found.

A study of about 3,000 elderly men and women since 1988 found married men lived on average 11 months longer than their single counterparts.

But marital status for women made no significant difference to longevity.

The researchers tracked for 15 years the health of people born before 1930 living in Dubbo, in central New South Wales.

Epidemiologist John McCallum, of the Victoria University in Melbourne, today said scientists were still speculating about the reasons for the difference.

"It's the least successful men who are not married and the most successful women who are not married," Professor McCallum said.

"One thought is that it's not so much marriage as the fact that it is the fitter people in a biological sense who get married.

"In other words, people who are hardier and stronger, who are going to survive longer anyway, get married.

"It could be that there are beneficial effects of having social support and company as well."

Prof McCallum said the Dubbo study had also found that being a non-drinker, a diabetic, a smoker or having high blood pressure reduced life expectancy.

"Over the 15 years, men gained about nine months if they had been drinking moderate alcohol and women about five months," he said.

The scientists found the benefits of alcohol consumption accumulate with age.

"When we looked at the participants after 10 years, men gained eight months and women three months (over non-drinkers)," said Prof McCallum, who addressed the International Healthy Ageing and Longevity Conference in Brisbane today.

AAP jhm/sc/sp