



Love will find a way — even to reduce disease

By DEWI COOKE

LOVE, in all its guises, may ward off the inevitable effects of ageing, such as degenerative disease and even death.

A Melbourne researcher told a Brisbane conference on health and ageing at the weekend: "There's a growing research base that suggests that the more we experience love in our life the longer we will live and the more protected we are against a whole lot of degenerative diseases."

Professor Marc Cohen, founding professor of complementary medicine at RMIT University, said in his address to the International Conference on Healthy Ageing and Longevity: "Whether it's another person or loving an activity or a piece of art or nature, love is all about connecting."

He pointed to a study of 1000 Israeli men with heart conditions, which found the relationship with their wives was important to their experience with the disease.

"The men who felt that they were loved by their wives had a 50 per cent reduction in their angina and cardiac disease," he said.

He told the conference that love also accounted for the fact that women generally lived longer than men and made up 85 per cent of the world's centenarians.

"Women are working with children who need love, their major work is to love," he said.

But how can science define love? Professor Cohen said there was no way to pinpoint the scientific processes that created feelings of love but that the love he referred to was of a more poetic nature.

"When I'm talking about love, I'm talking about a deep con-



nection with something else other than yourself," he said.

Professor Cohen said activities that needed focus or gave the illusion of time standing still could help improve quality of life.

"When you have love in your life it influences the laws of nature to . . . reduce the experience of time," he said.

"So if you're doing an activity that you love to do, whether it's making paper aeroplanes or gardening or looking into the eyes of your lover, you get

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moments when time seems to stop, or it seems like five minutes but it's really been an hour."

He is trying to test his theory by studying people during meditation — another state where time seems to slow down.

"The preliminary studies suggest that when you're meditating, your metabolic rate goes down," he said.

"That's a similar effect to when you go through caloric restriction — the only thing that's been demonstrated in the lab to prolong life." **With AAP**