

So who am I?

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After coming to Belau 2000 years ago, I remained about the same genetically except for a little mingling with the neighbor island of Yap. Natural selection took those of my brothers and sisters who failed to meet "fittest will survive" rule. I was muscular, lived on taro and fish and could row my canoe for days. I survived many wars where I beheaded my opponents and celebrated. My herbal concoctions worked for many of my ills, pains and even my bowel habits.

In the last 100 years of colonization I have changed genetically, I am heavier now, chew betelnut with tobacco, drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and use illicit drugs of course in combination with my schizophrenic, diabetic, and hypertensive medications. I have had gonorrhea, chlamydia, tuberculosis, leprosy and recently dengue fever.

Has it been only my genes that have changed? Could it be that the outside influence have unmasked certain diseases and behaviors? Was there oral cancer with chew-

ing betelnut alone? What about with tobacco? Is my alcoholism a hereditary or acquired behavior? The stresses that I feel are they similar to those they feel in Shelburn, India? Would a strong health education improve my diabetes and hypertension? And before I forget, could I develop Alzheimers? And was there a possibility of lead poisoning 100 years ago in Belau?

Surely I would change only if I can be provided well researched, timely and appropriate information on what happened to me in the last 100 years and what will likely to happen in the next 100 years.

References

1. Blaisdell K, Moon C. News: Research and training for Pacific island and Asian Americans. *Pacific Health Dialog*, 1996 3(1): 130.

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