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Sunlight is "absolutely crucial" in order to be healthy, says Steve Jones.

"Sunlight is absolutely crucial," said Steve Jones, speaking today at the Edinburgh International Book Festival about his research about the sun. The geneticist and author covered some of the topics written about in his new book, *Here Comes the Sun*, with journalist Allan Little.

"Scotland was long known as the 'Sick Man of Europe'," Jones said. "The life expectancy of Scottish men has certainly got better, but it's still the lowest in Western Europe, and it's not improving... Part of that, without question, has to do with the beneficent effects of sunlight on vitamin balance."

"Now children in both England and Scotland, go out into the sun for one hour a day less than they did, children of the same age, ten years ago," He added. "And Scottish children go into the sun less than any other children in the world."

Jones pointed to scientific research which claims people living north of Birmingham can "never make enough vitamin D from sunlight alone". He showed figures which suggested a correlation between increased sunlight and longer life expectancy, and reduced sunlight with increased risks of certain cancers, diabetes, and multiple sclerosis.

In a wide-reaching talk touching on genetics, evolution, natural selection, and snails, Jones also discussed the water cycle, which is directly affected by sunlight. He spoke of the disappearance of much of the world's land water, and the subsequent over extraction of below surface water.

"People talk about the oil wars of the future, I think my own perception is that the car is a fossil. Cars are going to disappear sooner or later. But people can't do without water. And there are already big rows between China, between India and the states of Nepal and the like which control the head waters."

When asked about the possibility of using solar energy to replace fossil fuels and mitigate climate change, Jones said: "Solar power I think is, in the end, the answer."