

Health Care Reform Begins At Home

We have a big debate going on in this country regarding "health reform". Unfortunately I see most of the emphasis going into making health insurance available to more people instead of taking real steps towards correcting a broken system. Although it would be good for more people to have access to medical services I believe that the wrong questions are still being asked. The United States has the highest ratio of money spent on health care to the overall health of the population of any country. Making a broken system more affordable to a greater amount of people is not the answer. What I am talking about here is the difference between *health care* and *sickness care*.

"Treat the person who has the disease, not the disease that has the person". Hippocrates had it right a very long time ago. Western medicine on the other hand has become totally focused on treating the disease instead of the person. Western medicine has increasingly fractured into specialties, a world upon their own. Each complaint a patient has is seen within this scope. A specific treatment for a specific complaint all neatly packaged into an allowable reimbursement code by the insurance industry.

We are far more than a sum of our parts. Each of our systems are interconnected and synergistic with each other. Even the term "mind - body" is misleading as there is not distinction between the two, they can't be separated. Our thoughts and emotions affect each of our cells as does our cells affect our thoughts and emotions. Each of us is as different on the inside as on the outside. Our nutritional requirements for example are as unique as our fingerprints.

"Treating the person who has the disease" means looking at the whole person; how you think, how you feel, what kind of support you have or don't have, your lifestyle choices, your past illnesses and traumas, as well as your symptoms. It also means supporting the inherent ability of the body to heal itself by determining what is blocking this natural process and supporting the body with what it needs to be well. If we think about it, the body is amazing in it's desire and ability to heal. We were designed to be well. Each cell is programmed to be well and knows how to go about doing this. If we get cut, we heal. If we break a bone, we heal. Not to say that we don't help the process, but it is our own body that does the actual healing. At any given moment our cells and tissues are breaking down the old and building new. Our immune systems are vigilant about protecting us. Any healthy body can have cancer cells, bacteria, virus', circulating at any given time and the immune system typically takes care of this without us even being aware.

So why are we not all perfectly healthy all the time? Granted the body does have it's weaknesses and it's limits. Genetics, accidents, environmental challenges, lifestyle, all have their impact. Some things we have more control over than others. But the fact remains, the human body is designed to be

well and will do everything it possibly can to be well. If we are in extreme cold, the body will direct its heat to the core to protect the organs. If our system is in an overly acidic state the body will take calcium from the bones in an attempt to bring the blood and fluids into their proper, crucial, pH level. The body is constantly striving to be well and balanced. This goes on largely undetected. So it is no wonder we can easily take this for granted. If we treated our car the way we treat our body we probably wouldn't make it down the street. But our car does not have the ability for self-healing, we do. And we know it, and we take advantage of it.

It is estimated 39% of the general population suffers from chronic disease. Three quarters of the nations health care spending is on chronic disease. It is estimated that three quarters of the population with diabetes don't even know they have it. The incidence of obesity in the United States has increased by thirty two percent in the last fifteen years. The average American is overworked, stressed, and under nourished. The average American consumes large amounts of highly processed, irradiated, genetically modified foods, laden with antibiotics and hormones and pounds of sugar. When the body begins to show signs of distress in the form of arthritis, high blood pressure, diabetes, chronic aches and pains, headaches and fatigue, the we tend to run to our doctor asking to be fixed in the quickest manner possible so we can get back to doing what we do. This is exactly what the pharmaceutical companies depend on. They have a pill for everything. Unfortunately their pills can actually create other complaints thus requiring more pills. The focus becomes treating the symptoms instead of finding the causal factors and addressing those. And because of the high price of health insurance and medications Americans are being forced to choose between affording their medications and insurance over other important necessities of life such as organic foods or alternative health care (massage, acupuncture, naturopathy).

Western medicine considers "preventative care" going in for a check-up once a year, getting your blood test and mammograms. Now granted early detection is very important and can save lives, don't get me wrong. But let's be honest, **real preventative care means being proactive in your health, making educated wise choices, choosing a healthy lifestyle, and making wellness a priority.** It is only when a majority of Americans become healthier, requiring less medicine and medical care, will the cost of health care in America begin to decline. This needs to be the focus of any health care reform, along with sensible business practices geared to the well being of the public over profits for the corporations. Our government can and should see that our food, air, and water supplies are healthful. This will only happen if we demand it. As consumers we can insist on healthful products free of harmful preservatives', hormones, antibiotics, and additives buy supporting companies and policies that promote quality products.

I really believe it is up to us as individuals to make health a priority and become proactive to this end. This does require we are become educated about our health and choices. This takes time and persistence. We now have

access to more information than we know what to do with. Often this information is conflicting and confusing. But if we are persistent and are not afraid to ask questions we can ultimately gain more and better control over our health and health care.

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