

Health Care in the 21st Century

The current paradigm for health care delivery is focused on emergency care delivered by family physicians and in hospitals. Despite billions of dollars being spent on this system to make it work, we are observing alarming trends. There continues to be increased incidence of debilitating diseases such as cancer, obesity, depression and arthritis. Why is this so?

We believe that we have created this dangerous situation by moving away from a holistic, common sense approach to frontline health care. The system has become increasingly reliant on high cost technology, medications and specialties. Lost is the focus on prevention and wellness. Instead of using our knowledge proactively to prevent illness, we continue to react to health care crises.

The solution to this health care crisis lies in changing the problematic trends that exist in our population. The health care of the 21st century can and must move toward a holistic and integrated approach.

Problematic Trends

There are problematic trends in society that are contributing to our current health care crisis.

1) People are living longer

We have a human population that is living longer than ever before. We have the largest proportion of our population, the baby-boomers, heading into retirement and old age. This trend is problematic, because our health care delivery system is ill equipped to deal with the expected increased draw on its resources. It is important that as more people live longer, they are able to stay vital, independent and illness free so that they can enjoy their loved ones and remain active.

2) Health care costs continue to grow

Health care is paid for in every situation by an insurance plan. The socialized system that we are accustomed to is not free, but is fully funded by our tax dollars. We are observing a trend to the downloading of services to the private sector of any “non-essential” medical service. This includes dentists, chiropractors, optometrists, holistic practitioners, massage therapists and naturopaths to name a few. We are also experiencing an increasing reliance on medical specialties and high cost technology. This increasing level of complexity within the current health care system is costing us more than it ever has before.

The 21st century will see an increasing need for the individual citizen to become a health care consumer. Regardless of whether a person needs hospitalization, medical services, rehabilitation, home care, or alternative care, he/she will have a finite number of health

care dollars to spend. It will be increasingly important that health care become low cost, preventative and integrated into an easy to understand and easy to apply process.

3) There is decreased choice for patients in the system

Patients lose when their ability to choose is limited by a system that lacks in resources. A health care system that is expensive, specialized and fragmented produces bottlenecks in access to care. A patient's right to choose should be an inalienable right, however, a lack of resources in the current health care system limits patients' choices.

4) There are increasing health care choices for patients outside of the system

With the increasing access to holistic methods of health care delivery and the Internet, patients will be more informed about alternative health care options outside of the current medical paradigm. The funding shortage and downloading to the private sector will fuel an explosion in personal health care options.

5) Lack of leadership in prevention and wellness education

There is an abundance of scientific literature supporting the positive role that focusing on prevention and wellness has on the health of a society. Despite this overwhelming support in our medical knowledge, there has been no leadership shown within the current health care system in implementing health and wellness strategies.

Top Ten Health Dangers Facing People in the 21st Century

Obesity

Obesity has become an epidemic in North America. It is known that those who are obese are much more likely to suffer from health conditions that can severely affect the length and quality of life. There exists a multitude of fad diets and lifestyle approaches that claim to address the problem of obesity. To date, there has not shown to be a broad reaching solution to this very common health danger.

Depression

A large proportion of the population battles with bouts of depression. There have been a lot of statistics that show that the incidence of depression is on the rise. In the workplace, depression has been shown to have significant impacts on employees and their quality of life. Depression has proven to be a big source of lost productivity and increased sick days.

The stresses of an accelerated and more complex life can add up and cause people to feel overwhelmed and powerless. Those who suffer from depression shut down under the weight of an increasing pressure to perform and cope in the juggle of work, life and home life.

High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is one of the most common signs used to determine a person's cardiovascular health. When a person's blood pressure gets too high it indicates that the nerves that control the resistance in the blood vessels are over working. This happens when a person's body is experiencing stress, or what is called the "fight or flight response". The other reason that people experience high blood pressure is a direct result of what people eat or drink. Our diets have the biggest impact on our cardiovascular system. Dehydration and an overconsumption of stimulants and unhealthy foods can lead to atherosclerosis and high blood pressure.

Safe Water/Food

The biggest health threat to individuals in the 21st century will be securing safe and nutritious sources of food and water. The environment has been strained to its limits in dealing with pollution, chemically and genetically modified foods and soil degradation. Our water sources are requiring increased treatment to insure their safety as they are becoming increasingly polluted.

There has been a growing trend toward whole and organic foods. It is vital that the population become better educated in their shopping and eating habits so that they can experience superior health and influence market forces towards healthier, more sustainable growing practices.

Diabetes

This insipient disease has been getting more press in the recent past because of its increasing prevalence. There are two types of diabetes that we know about. Type 1 is the kind of diabetes that one acquires as a child. Insulin has been used to treat this type of the disease. Type 2 is the kind that occurs in adults. Although its exact causes are not known, it tends to occur in individuals who are over weight, drink alcohol, and have a diet that is rich in refined sugars and low in basic nutrition.

Cancer

Cancer is now exceeding heart disease as the number one killer. Cancer occurs when the body's immune system malfunctions and allows dysfunctional cells to replicate unchecked. Tumors grow and infiltrate tissues in the area and can metastasize, or seed, throughout the body. It is believed that the trend of increased cancer rates can be attributed to poor diet and an increased exposure to environmental stresses such as heavy metals, PCBs, radiation of all kinds, and pesticide use.

Arthritis

Arthritis can occur in many types. The most common is called osteoarthritis. This type is the wear and tear type of arthritis that typically occurs more often as we age. Much like a car can wear out in its moving parts, the human body can be neglected or abused past its ability to compensate. When this happens in the human frame, the surface of joints become damaged and cause a build up of calcified tissue. Chronic inflammation in these damaged joints creates pain and a reduced range of motion.

Heart Disease and Stroke

Heart disease and stroke are very prevalent health dangers for the middle-aged and elderly. Heart disease and stroke most commonly occur when fatty plaquing within the vessels create blockages. When this happens in vital areas like in the heart wall or in the brain, sensitive tissues are deprived of oxygen and die.

Plaquing on the inner vessel walls that are implicated in stroke and heart attacks are directly impacted by what we put into our bodies. Our diets play a vital role in determining how healthy our blood vessels stay.

Senility

Senility occurs in the aging population to varying degrees and for various reasons. Losing one's mental faculties can be attributed to Alzheimer's, however; other common causes include mini-strokes, drug side effects, nutritional deficiencies, and decreased mental stimulation. Many people can deal with the thought of slowly losing their physical capacities as they age as they can modify their lifestyles to suit their individual needs. However, most people fear the loss of their mental faculties as they age.

Physical Infirmary

We have an aging population of baby-boomers who can be expected to live to a ripe old age. One of the biggest health problems facing this population and the health services industry is insuring an individual's health and independence. As individuals age, simple care of the body allows much higher levels of function and quality of life than in any other age group. Maintaining strength and balance in an aged individual minimizes the risk of slips and falls. If an individual has a sound physical body, he/she can continue to exercise and participate in activities that enhance well-being and enjoyment. It is possible to live longer and live better by keeping the physical body in good working order.

What is the Solution to the 21st Century Health Care Crisis?

The solution to the health care trends that we are observing in our society will need to satisfy eight principles:

1) Provide centralized and comprehensive health care managed by an excellent holistic generalist.

The health care system is in need of an excellent holistic generalist who can act as a frontline health care provider. Many people are looking for a person who can manage most of their health care needs without the need for time-consuming referrals and conflicting advice. A health care provider who is educated in the medical sciences and from a holistic healing perspective can be invaluable as a personal health resource.

2) Effective symptom relief

There is much more to managing your health than simply eradicating symptoms. There are people who can be in poor health and not necessarily exhibit overt symptoms of disease. However, symptoms do play a vital role as an early warning system. People are motivated to action by wanting to feel good and not wanting to feel pain or discomfort. A health care delivery system that is orchestrated by an excellent generalist must have the tools to bring quick relief to the suffering.

3) Promote longevity

People are living longer on the average. These individuals are looking forward to enjoying their retirements. They want to travel, play sports and enjoy their grandchildren. In short, people want to enjoy life until they die. Nobody wants to suffer or become disabled at a young age. In talking to many individuals, one of their top fears for the future is not being able to take care of themselves when they age.

4) Promote emotional well-being and effective stress management

Negative emotional states are only a symptom of improper physiological function. Emotions are only the result of our reactions to our environment in both body and mind. Therefore, it is important that health care is delivered in such a way as to maintain a physiology that promotes emotional well-being. When stress does build in our lives, it is important that guidance is given in how best to deal with it.

5) Promote good eating habits

In no other area of health care does conflicting information and a lack of general knowledge exist then with that of food. Many people do not understand what foods their bodies need. They receive most of their information from media and as time has proven, advertisements cannot always be trusted. Nutrition has the single biggest impact on a person's state of health and yet, education on the subject in most health care settings is missing, or insufficient. People need to have balanced guidance in a diet that works well for their own particular bodies.

6) Provide fitness and exercise prescription

Moderate exercise and fitness regimens are important in a society that is increasingly urban and sedentary. The physical body remains well if it remains flexible, fluid and strong. Contrary to many of the exercise fads that come and go, the body can be kept in tip-top shape rather easily. Health care must incorporate basic training in the pillars of physical health.

7) Provide access to health care options and support a patient's choice

People are demanding the right to be fully informed of their health care options. Unfortunately, individuals are finding that many of the common health care options offer little choice in how, when and where they will be applied. What people want is an easily accessible system in which they can receive services on demand. They do not want to be faced with situation in which the right treatment cannot be found, or the coordination of treatments is too cumbersome in time and money to be feasible.

What people want is a menu of services that they can choose from that uniquely serves their needs. They are looking for one stop shopping in which the majority of their health care needs can be addressed.

8) Incorporating a coaching component to health care that uses health as a catalyst for personal growth and development.

Patient education has always been of paramount importance in the doctor-patient relationship. Doctor actually means teacher and not healer. Education is important in health care because, it is usually a lack of knowledge of the cause of diseases that allows the problem to happen in the first place. There was a time when common sense guidance from the health care professional brought relief to the worried. It gave practical and easily applied techniques to maintain good health without having to resort to radical procedures. This approach to doctoring has been lost.

Coaching is the only viable alternative for incorporating an effective patient education model in health care. Concerted effort placed on life-long lifestyle improvement is the only solution to an ailing individual. We cannot expect an individual to remain in good physical condition for their lifetime without constant effort and focus. How is health care any different? Health care cannot be delivered in infrequent, short visits with vast amount of unsupervised time in between. People need information, support, direction and encouragement in their journey of wellness.

The Health Care Solution

The 21st century will see a great deal of change in health care. We believe that people are looking for solutions to their health concerns. People are intelligent and informed. They are interested in new approaches that work. A large percentage of the population has a healthy skepticism of institutions. People will never again be passive participants in their own health care.

Individuals see the need to invest in their health. We are entering a new territory in which greater choice and accountability will see individuals in society become self-directed in their health care management. It is the team approach of doctor and patient that will deliver effective and valuable health care service in the future.

The Integrative Health Care Solution™

The Integrative Health Care Solution™ (IHCS) is an evolutionary health management process for highly motivated individuals. We believe that our approach to health care is the wave of the future. It offers a comprehensive, and wellness based health care delivery paradigm that eliminates an individual's health dangers. This is accomplished through effective passive patient care and focused health coaching.

TIHCS provides symptom treatment and promotes personal growth and development. Under the direction of an excellent holistic general practitioner, individuals can capitalize on their own genius to realize the inborn potential they have for living a longer, healthier and more fulfilling life.

Our process allows an individual to experience and explore the healing process. As individuals evolve in the understanding of their body's and environments they become better at adapting to challenge and change in their lives. Our patients become experts in their own health care. Through progressive self-awareness, our patients educate and empower themselves to ever-increasing states of health and wellness.

A note about the author: Dr. David Mattinen has an undergraduate degree in Kinesiology from the University of Waterloo and his Doctor of Chiropractic from the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College. He is the co-founder of Core Insight, a wellness company based in St. John's, NL, as well as the IHCS. David uses a combination of traditional chiropractic adjustments, craniosacral therapy, energetic techniques and nutritional supplementation to assist his patients along their path to optimal health, naturally. He can be reached at d.mattinen@coreinsight.ca.