

Healthcare

by Robert Jawitz

The healthcare establishment in our modern society is the best it's ever been. There have been terrific advancements in all areas of diagnostics, medicine and surgery. The professionals in this healthcare establishment; physicians, nurses, diagnosticians, aides, research doctors and technicians are the best trained and most highly motivated of any professions in the world. While there is always room for improvement and while this quality may vary from one location to another, their work has been commendable and we hope and expect it will continue to higher levels of achievement.

The problem with our healthcare system is that we soon won't be able to afford it. In the 5 years since the year 2,000, National Health Expenditures went from \$1.36 trillion to \$1.88 trillion, 13.8% of GNP to 16.0% of GNP. This is the fastest rate in history, 3 times that of inflation. In that same period, family household healthcare costs have risen over 45% now being the 5th largest item in the household budget behind housing, childcare, food and taxes. In that same period, an additional 7 million families were without health insurance, bringing the total to 15.9% of all households. In that same period, median household income fell 9% and household debt increased 42%.

The way Europe and Canada deals with the burgeoning costs of healthcare is to ration the care. While they provide almost universal healthcare insurance, the quality of the care suffers. While the Rockhouse Mountain Institute is committed to a resilient economy, it also supports quality in our culture and everyday lives. We should not sacrifice the quality of our healthcare while we seek a reduction in the cost.

The solution to this apparent contradiction is in our approach to healthcare. Both the Euro/Canadian and the US healthcare systems are based on curing disease. The solution to the healthcare dilemma will be based on prevention of disease. If less people need the healthcare system, then the costs of that system

will go down and the quality need not be sacrificed. If more people are healthy, then the insurance cost per unit of population goes down and the cost to the family, which is basically insurance cost, also goes down.

Both the Euro/Canadian and US systems have made attempts to improve prevention of disease. The standard now is to encourage frequent physician check-ups, without a symptomatic purpose, to check for early signs of cancer (and to perform biopsies and minor surgeries to mitigate them), to prescribe drugs to allay risk factors (such as *statins* to lower cholesterol in the case of heart disease) and to make a token effort to change life-style including prescribing weight reduction and the stopping of smoking.

But the real solution is in a more substantial change of life-style. There should be no question that clean air, clean water and clean food are necessary for a healthy life. There should be no question that the exercise, rest and reduction of stress, both physically and mentally, are necessary for a healthy life.

Clean air means relieving pollution both from society (industry, energy sources and auto emissions) and our habits (smoking). Clean water means relieving pollution from industrial processes, domestic processes (gasoline, oil and household wastes) and over fertilization and pesticide spraying of our agriculture.

The key components in prevention of disease by change of life-style are in “clean food” and “exercise, rest and reduction of stress”. Clean food means more than just washing our vegetables. It means eating fresh food. It means eating food that was produced without pesticides or hormones. It means eating food that is rich in the nutrients we need so we don’t have to rely on “supplements”. It means eating food that avoids poisoning our systems with known contaminants like excessive alcohol, excessive sugar, and sources of LDL cholesterol (animal and hydrogenated fats). It also means eating foods in a balanced way so that we avoid obesity.

Reducing physical stress means substituting activity that could be classified as exercise from one that saps our energy. Participating in a specialized work environment, as required in the industrialized system of mass production, means that we must do repetitive tasks that wear down our fragile biological systems. This may mean working in a factory installing the same part day after day or it may mean sitting at the same desk day after day pecking at a computer. The way we make work activity a form of exercise is to vary the tasks one does each day. We must constantly be in touch with our bodies so as never to cause strain. When our bodies say, enough, we must have the freedom to change tasks, even to rest, to avoid wearing down our bodies. Rest is as important as work. If we pace ourselves, we can accomplish anything given enough time.

Reducing mental stress means reducing anxiety about making enough money, the welfare of loved ones and achieving our legacies. In our specialized hierarchical work force, one always has a boss and since the goals of the large company are money oriented, the incentive for the boss is to stress the workers (and his/herself) to produce. This is true for the entire culture, from the lowest paid clerk to the chairman of the board (who must satisfy the shareholders). We put ourselves through this because we need to make money for the welfare of our love ones and we exhaust ourselves doing it so we have no energy left for achieving our goals other than raising children.

The mission of the Rockhouse Mountain Institute is to promote and support an alternative life-style that can lead to a healthy life. This life-style promotes living in an environment of clean air and clean water, promotes the growing and ingesting of fresh food from our own gardens, promotes the reduction of physical stress by substituting a variety of daily activities (supporting the family business, performing light maintenance, creating art work, gardening, cooking, childcare and eldercare) for the repetitive activity in the money-oriented culture. It promotes the freedom to rest and use our energy where we think is most useful. It promotes the reduction of mental stress by reducing the income requirements needed to

maintain the family. By promoting living together with the generations, it reduces anxiety on the welfare of loved ones (childcare and eldercare) and by freeing up time, it helps people realize the ambitions of their legacies.