



A WELLNESS INITIATIVE FOR THE NATION

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Wellness Initiative for the Nation (WIN) is to **proactively prevent disease and illness, promote health and productivity, and create well-being and flourishing for the people of America**. WIN can also prevent the looming fiscal disaster in our health care system. In fact, effectively addressing preventable chronic illness and creating a productive, self-care society is our only long-term hope for changing a system that, despite the recent health reform law, costs too much and is delivering less health and little care to fewer people.

OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

★ The overarching recommendation is to **create a Wellness Initiative for the Nation focused on promotion of health through lifestyle change and integrative health practices**. A key recommendation of WIN has been the creation of a trans-Agency initiative specifically focused on developing policies and programs for lifestyle-based chronic disease prevention and management, integrative health care practices and health promotion. The Affordable Care Act legislated such an initiative in the National Prevention, Health Promotion and Public Health Council with a mandate that it produce a national prevention, health promotion and public health strategy. The Council has met under the leadership of the Surgeon General and released the 2010 Annual Status Report. The Council is to receive input from a Presidentially-appointed Advisory Group but the membership of that Group has not been appointed.



The initial step towards a Wellness Initiative for the Nation (WIN) to create a trans-Agency initiative has been achieved with the creation of the National Prevention, Health Promotion and Public Health Council under the leadership of the Surgeon General.



★ The Council and its activities constitute only one facet of WIN and the persistent recommendation of those focused on creating better health and reducing costs—to **invest in and improve prevention and public health** and support development of an educational workforce and informational toolkit for delivery of this goal in local populations. The goal of the WIN leadership is to provide program analysis, develop policies, guide curriculum and evidence standards, and establish incentives and mechanisms that support these efforts to shift the national focus to health promotion and disease prevention.

★ The policies and programs of WIN are grounded in the **continuity of health and the prevention of illness throughout the human lifecycle** and approach this continuity through comprehensive lifestyle and integrative health care approaches that have demonstrated effectiveness.



Other specific recommendations are as follows:

1. SYSTEMS WELLNESS ADVANCEMENT TEAMS NETWORK ("THE INNOVATORS")

- ★ Establish a network of Systems Wellness Advancement Teams (SWAT) with national and then local leaders in health promotion/disease prevention and integrative practices to maintain the wellness vision and guide the management of the trans-Agency initiative in the implementation of this new paradigm.
- ★ Empower the SWAT network to continuously evaluate and translate effective prevention and health promotion practices into local delivery tools and policy changes.
- ★ Create learning communities that evaluate and translate innovations in lifestyle and integrative health practices into new settings and populations across the network.

2. HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROFESSIONAL COACH TRAINING ("THE ADVOCATES")

- ★ Establish educational and practice standards in delivery of effective, comprehensive lifestyle and integrative health care approaches, and train individuals qualified to focus full-time on prevention, creating health and healing, and enhancing productivity and flourishing.
- ★ Facilitate any qualified and state licensed health care practitioner or educator to gain specialist certification in prevention, health and wellness delivery, or attain sub-specialist status for integrative health care delivery in specific settings and populations—for example, schools, worksites, health care settings, and long-term care facilities.
- ★ Create a Health Corps to provide an army of young and older people that would learn and model wellness behavior and support delivery of wellness education and training by the coaches.

3. HEALTH AND WELLNESS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TOOLKIT ("THE AVATARS")

- ★ Create an advanced information tracking and feedback system (an applied health promotion technology toolkit) for delivery of personalized wellness education, customized to each person’s level of readiness, IT capabilities and stage of life.
- ★ Interface this applied wellness toolkit with electronic health records for use by the public, the health and wellness coaches, the Health Corps, and the medical and health care delivery systems.
- ★ Coalesce current health promotion/prevention knowledge into a science-based Health Quotient Index (HQI) for personalized delivery of information to individuals and communities through multiple interfaces.

4. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INCENTIVES ("THE INDUSTRY")

- ★ Create economic incentives (through bundling, capitation, premium reductions, tax reductions and other methods) for individuals, communities, and public and private sector institutions to create and deliver self-care training, wellness products and preventive health care practices.
- ★ Establish intellectual property protection policies that reward wellness innovations, using the latest technologies with evidence-based and comparative cost-value determinations.
- ★ Establish incentives for both personal and community activities that establish social and cultural change which creates public wellness values and a flourishing society.



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These recommendations are designed to work in a coordinated fashion on the specific leverage points of cultural and institutional change. If applied in concert, these recommendations are a “triple multiplier” of health, productivity and economic stimulus for the country by: 1) creating new jobs in the educational, health and technology sectors; 2) increasing health and productivity across the population in both the short and long-run; and 3) stimulating innovation and investment by the private sector into the creation of a health and wellness industry and society.

BACKGROUND

Too many Americans go without high-value preventive services and health promotion practices.⁶ As a result, they get sick and utilize expensive medical interventions.¹ Examples of underutilized preventive and health promotion practices include cancer screening to prevent advanced colon disease, immunizations to protect against flu or pneumonia, fitness and resilience training to enhance productivity and well-being, self-care and integrative health practices to treat chronic pain and enhance healing, and healthy lifestyle education to prevent diabetes, hypertension, stroke, cardiovascular disease and cancer.



The nation (and increasingly the world) faces epidemics of obesity, mental illness and chronic disease, as well as new threats of pandemic flu and bioterrorism.^{16,17} Yet despite all of this, less than four cents of every health care dollar is spent on prevention and public health.¹⁸ We are first in spending for health care and 37th in health of the industrialized nations.¹⁹ At current cost rates, health care will make up 25% of the GNP by 2025 and 49% by 2082!²⁰ The first of the “baby boomers” will turn 65 in 2011, creating an avalanche of aging care needs that will bury the current Medicare system. Our health care system is a broken disease treatment system, and the time for change is well overdue.

*In his book *The Power of Progress*, John Podesta summarizes the situation succinctly. “It is not enough to merely expand access to the current system. Americans must also secure better value for their health care dollars through improved health care quality, outcomes, and efficiency. First, we must create a national focus on disease prevention and health promotion. The United States is plagued by preventable diseases that have a devastating impact on personal health and contribute to the nation’s soaring health costs. Yet our current system focuses on treating these diseases after they occur, rather than promoting good health and reducing the incidence of disease in the first place.”² (pg. 182)*



True prevention and health promotion requires something different than just access to current services. It requires a new vision of health and disease based on the primary components of human flourishing. Science has now clearly demonstrated a radically new view of chronic health and disease than the one developed over 100 years ago and currently in use. No longer is it reasonable to wait until disease reaches an advanced diagnostic threshold before our system provides expensive interventions.

THE COST OF AVOIDABLE CHRONIC ILLNESS

★ A recent Milken Institute report showed that the combined cost of the top seven modifiable chronic diseases (cancer, diabetes, hypertension, stroke, heart disease, pulmonary conditions, and mental disorders) exceeds \$270 billion per year in direct care costs and, with the addition of lost productivity, reaches over \$1 trillion annually.²¹

★ These costs are largely avoidable by changes in behavior. A modest focus on prevention, early intervention and behavioral change could save annually in treatment and productivity loss costs an estimated \$217 billion and \$1.6 trillion, respectively. This could add over \$6.9 trillion to the GDP between now and 2023—27% of the GDP’s economic impact.

- ★ Modest gains in just smoking and obesity control, for example, would reduce illness in the top seven conditions by \$24-30 million, save up to \$100 billion in treatment costs, and add from \$340-500 billion to the GDP in the next 15 years.
- ★ Application of the top 20 proven clinical preventive services (CPS) would save an additional \$4 billion in treatment costs and increase quality of life years by over 2 million.²² WIN will focus on effective delivery for the 10 CPS recommendations that address core primary prevention and lifestyle change factors.²²
- ★ Suffering associated with chronic disease and pain produces an even greater burden, the cost of which is not quantifiable. Self-care practices can reduce pain, improve quality of life and enhance well-being.^{23, 24, 25} Complementary health care practices are especially useful in this regard.^{26,27}

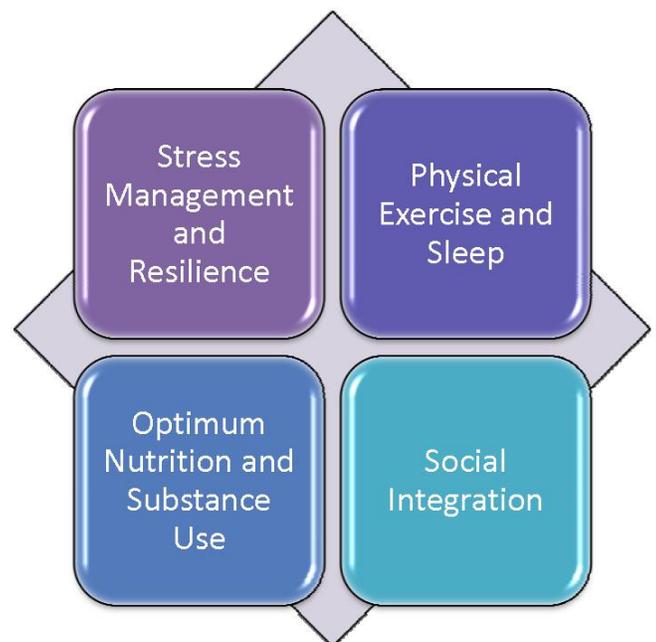
CAUSES OF AVOIDABLE CHRONIC DISEASE

- ★ Seventy percent of avoidable costs could be mitigated by behavior changes that involve healthy lifestyle development, wellness enhancement, and early detection and intervention for the conditions listed above. Two-thirds of chronic illness is caused by lifestyle and behavioral factors that are influenced by our mental, social or physical environments.²⁸
- ★ Five behavioral factors contribute the most to mitigating costs and to increasing sustainable wellness. These are: 1) reducing toxic substance exposure (smoking, alcohol, drugs and pollution); 2) sufficient exercise; 3) healthy diet; 4) psychosocial integration and stress management; and 5) early detection and intervention.^{21, 29}
- ★ To achieve gains in wellness and productivity requires a change in the nature of the culture and services provided to our communities. Increased access to our current disease treatment system is not sufficient and will increase costs. We need a concerted investment in creating a flourishing human capital focused on prevention, productivity, healing and well-being.³⁰

COMPONENTS OF HUMAN HEALTH BEHAVIOR AND PRODUCTIVITY OPTIMIZATION

We know now that health and disease are a continuum and we know the fundamental elements that move us along that continuum. Both before and after the threshold, between health and disease, the basic elements of health promotion can slow or prevent chronic disease progression and enhance function, productivity and well-being. No matter what the illness or stage of life we now know that the same components of human health behavior and productivity optimization apply. These components are:

1. ***Stress Management and Resilience.*** The first component is the induction of mind-body states known to counter the stress response and improve readiness and motivational factors for lifestyle change. Recent research has demonstrated that mind/body practices can be taught and can counter the physical and psychological effects of stress, prevent PTSD, increase fitness and weight management, and enhance cognitive and physical function.





- 2. *Physical Exercise and Sleep.* The second component is physical exercise. Optimum physical exercise can reduce stress hormone swings and improve brain function, improve fitness and enhance weight control. Fitness, along with proper rest and sleep, and rapid management of injury from physical training, will maintain functioning and productivity.
- 3. *Optimum Nutrition and Substance Use.* Third, ideal weight and optimal physiological function occurs best in the context of proper nutrition and reduced exposure to chemicals (such as smoking, alcohol and drugs) that impair function. Food and substance management requires systematic motivational systems, environmental control, food and substance selection training, and family and community involvement.
- 4. *Social Integration.* Finally, the social environment is key. Social integration is not only health enhancing in its own right, but is essential for sustainability of behavior change. Health promotion is best achieved in a group and community context, in which common issues in the culture around behavior and lifestyle change are valued and shared with peers, friends and family. Both health and happiness are socially contagious. Social integration allows individuals, their families and communities the opportunity to spread healthy behavior and find day-to-day solutions for maintaining well-being and resilience.

A culture and industry that values and optimizes these components will produce a flourishing, productive society. In addition, the impending economic disaster of continuing to solely apply the current sickness treatment system to our rapidly aging population can be altered at its core. The policy recommendations of WIN are designed to focus directly on optimizing these components for individuals and communities.



CREATING SOURCES OF PREVENTION, PRODUCTIVITY, HEALING AND WELLNESS

★ Public policy should support, stimulate and enhance each individual’s inherent wellness and healing capacities since this provides the most powerful force we have for maintaining health and productivity when well, and for enhancing recovery and well-being when ill. ³¹

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★ Approaches to the prevention of chronic disease, detection of early risk factors, and enhancement of well-being are well known but not done well or systemically by our health care system. ¹



★ Central to a new model of prevention and health care are the development of Optimal Healing Environments (OHE) ³² and integrative health care practices ²⁷ that can support and stimulate inherent healing capacities on mental, social, spiritual and physical levels. As described below, many of these practices provide lower cost alternatives to current conventional practices. ^{33, 34}

★ Of the “Blueprint” recommendations, WIN will focus specifically on supporting areas in “Patient Activation” (pp 81-95) and “Public Health” (pp. 96-111) but also contribute to other areas, including nurse and geriatric training (p. 9, 23), wellness information technology (p. 27, 47), and developing bundling, capitation and tax relief approaches for delivery of evidence-based health promotion and integrative health care practices (p. 69-71).

MODELS OF SUCCESSFUL PREVENTION AND HEALTH PROMOTION

THE MILITARY

The military has been at the forefront of health promotion and performance enhancement innovations for decades and has recently developed a renewed effort in “human performance optimization”.³⁵ The non-profit Samueli Institute is working closely with a coalition of military partners to develop the next generation “Systems Wellness System” as a model for combining systems biology with lifestyle change to develop personalized prevention and health promotion tools.³⁶ This program could become a model for national application.

HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYSTEMS

The health care delivery industry has a major role in advancing prevention and wellness and the “Blueprint” is primarily focused on this area. A recent study of eight “exemplar” OHE programs in health systems demonstrated the ways in which WIN could translate current innovations in health promotion and healing into our health care systems.³⁷ The use of health information technology could further extend skills in health promotion and self-care and disease management beyond the walls of the hospital and into communities and the home.³⁸

SELF-CARE AND INTEGRATED CARE

The widespread application of selected, evidence-based integrated health care practices could markedly improve quality of life and reduce costs.³⁴ Behavioral and mind-body practices have been repeatedly demonstrated to enhance quality of life, improve self-care and reduce costs.³⁹ Acupuncture has now been definitively shown to improve chronic pain conditions (head, neck, knee and back) at almost twice the rate of guideline-based conventional treatment.^{40, 41} Massage may be even more cost effective in back pain.⁴² Massage has also been shown in multiple studies to accelerate recovery of premature babies, with projected cost savings of \$4.7 billion per year if widely used.⁴³ Training retired persons to deliver this infant massage results in reduced depression and enhanced quality of life in those giving the massage – a double benefit.⁴⁴ Herbs and dietary supplements are widely used by the population but with little to no guidance on what is safe and effective.⁴⁵ Under current policies, these practices and products are not sufficiently profitable to provide economic incentives for research and investment. Thus, they remain under-investigated and unutilized at the expense of higher cost and more heroic treatment approaches. A properly focused wellness policy would change this situation.

WORKSITES

It is now well established that multi-component worksite wellness programs enhance productivity, well-being and return on investment (ROI) in industry.⁴⁶ For example, Procter and Gamble and the Dow Chemical Company have improved productivity and reduced health care costs, with a positive ROI for their programs at multiple sites.^{47, 48} Companies are now extending these efforts to reducing costs of medical treatment and for chronic disease prevention and management.⁴⁹ Health promotion efforts for America’s workers is a double multiplier for the economy by improving productivity and creating jobs.⁵⁰ The C. Everett Koop Awards of The Health Project have selected some of the most successful and innovative health promotion programs that could be applied nationally by the WIN.⁵¹





COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS

Community-based, comprehensive lifestyle modification programs have demonstrated effectiveness for mitigating cardiovascular risk factors⁵², stroke prevention⁵³, smoking cessation⁵⁴, treating obesity⁵⁵ and osteoporosis⁵⁶, and diabetes prevention⁵⁷, as well as other chronic conditions.⁵⁸ In Japan, comprehensive lifestyle modification programs including physical exercise and diet/nutrition education have been implemented and extensively evaluated in work sites and elderly populations, and results have shown dramatic improvements for obesity and lifestyle-related disease.⁵⁹ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has targeted community-based programs as an effective vehicle for delivering health promotion and disease prevention campaigns and HHS has recently released \$10 million to 10 national non-profit organizations to support Community Prevention and Wellness Initiatives.



The Wellness Initiative for the Nation will select the best of these programs and develop policies to establish them throughout the United States. The long-term impact of such policies would be a golden age of health, productivity and well-being; a flourishing and great society.



CHILDREN

Wellness must start with children by teaching them lifelong healthy habits. Healthy habits need to be a core competency delivered by our educational system. A number of exemplar programs in schools have produced major impacts on wellness behavior, including effects on obesity. For example, a school program in underserved elementary school children has demonstrated improved health behaviors that spread to families and the surrounding community.⁶⁰ Other examples are the *Planet Health Program*, and the *VERB Program*.^{61, 62, 63, 64, 65} The *Wellspring Academy's* schools, camps and community programs have produced marked success in improved weight management, enhanced self-esteem and improved mental health during adolescence, a difficult time of life to affect change.^{61, 66}

AGING

Our population is rapidly aging, resulting in ballooning of chronic disease and illness. The majority of health care costs are expended in the last years of life. The older population is highly motivated for self-care and makes extensive use of complementary and alternative practices, some helpful and some harmful.^{67, 68} Extending functional years through prevention (such as vaccination), early detection (such as screening), lifestyle and self-management training can also reduce costs of chronic disease treatment. For example, simple procedures (such as providing a health coach or call nurse) significantly reduce health care costs and mortality in cardiovascular disease.⁶⁹ Extension of health care into the home with TeleHealth (the delivery of health-related services and information via telecommunications technologies) could further maintain function and reduce costs in the senior population up to 70% with current technologies.^{70, 71 72} A set of recently funded Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) demonstration projects of health promotion in older people are examples of programs that serve as national models under the WIN.⁷³

THE UNDERSERVED

The widening gap in health disparities is one of the major moral failures of our society.⁷⁴ Social isolation and socio-economic class are major determinants of chronic disease and premature death.²⁸ The poor often seek out and use self-care and complementary medical practices, but get little guidance on which practices are effective or harmful.⁷⁵ Self-care and integrative health care approaches, when properly delivered, can significantly improve health in these populations. For example, a recent Medicaid demonstration project providing integrative health care found an 86% reduction in pain, 25% reduction in health care utilization and 20% reduction in prescription drug use in an underserved community.^{76, 77} Samuelli Institute, along with the Institute for Alternative Futures and the Health Resources and Services Administration recently brought together integrated health care programs for the underserved as possible models for WIN.⁷⁵



These examples are only a few of the practices that could improve health, productivity and well-being, and reduce costs from disease and disability in our nation. For other examples involving disease screening, vaccination, nutritional practices and educational programs, see the governmental summaries on those areas.^{6, 78, 79-87}

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