

Health Insights Today

A SERVICE OF CLEVELAND CHIROPRACTIC COLLEGE

Spring 2009, Volume 2, Issue 2

EDITOR'S LOG

Embodying the Change We Seek: Health Reform as a Teachable Moment

By Daniel Redwood, DC

If ever there was a time for health care visionaries to develop practical proposals and strategies for their implementation, this is it. The United States is approaching a major turning point, with opportunity for positive change greater than any we've seen in our lifetimes. As the reform debate gears up in the coming months, *Health Insights Today* and our blog, *The Daily HIT*, will bring you news and analysis of key developments, including some not yet on the radar screen of the large corporate media outlets.

That begins in this issue, with our focus on the Wellness Initiative for the Nation and related articles on why health reform must include a major shift toward prevention, health promotion and integrative care. At a time when health finance issues often overwhelm thoughtful discussion of what is truly needed to deliver health and wellness to our population, we have a special responsibility to say what has not yet been said and to raise our voices in support of those whose proposals go to the heart of the current crisis. If you believe in democracy and see a need for change, speak out. Be part of the solution.

On many levels, our nation and our world have reached a tipping point, in which short-term-only thinking has become a luxury we no longer can afford. Crisis yields opportunity. From climate change to economic meltdown, from preventable chronic diseases to unsustainable levels of resource consumption, major change has become a necessity. We all must learn to think long-term, to ask ourselves the critical question: How will our decisions now affect the world our great-grandchildren inhabit?

Those of us in health care should start where we are, looking first at our own behaviors and working to harmonize our actions with what we know to be the most health-affirming choices available to us. Then, we can share these practiced insights with our patients. Finally, we need to imagine the world we wish to create and engage in a local, national, and worldwide conversation about how to make it happen. Small steps in the right direction matter greatly, both for their inherent value and because they set a tone, like the ringing of a beautiful bell. That tone can then resonate outward into our homes, families, workplaces and communities. We can become the change we seek. That is how transformation happens.

Wellness Initiative for the Nation

In this issue, we feature four articles on health reform. Early this year, I interviewed Wayne Jonas, MD, about the Wellness Initiative for the Nation (WIN), a groundbreaking health policy proposal he crafted with colleagues at the Samueli Institute, where he is president and CEO. Dr. Jonas was a military physician for 20 years and headed the National Institutes of Health's Office of Alternative Medicine in the mid-1990s, its years of greatest growth and transformation. He speaks with the voice of experience, in reasoned tones but with a profound sense of urgency.

WIN embodies the best insights of the prevention and health promotion movement, providing legislators (if they will listen) with the broad directions and policy specifics needed to reverse our current epidemic-scale levels of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, cancer, and osteoporosis. Everyone interested in including meaningful prevention and health promotion programs in a reformed health care system should read the current draft of WIN at www.siib.org. President Obama has spoken often about the need to prioritize prevention. WIN is a program he and his team need to know about and to implement through the newly created White House Office of Health Reform.

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8500 Community Health Reform Meetings

I took part in a conference call hosted by the Samueli Institute to discuss the WIN proposal. This was one of the 8500-plus Community Health Care Discussions held in the final two weeks of December 2008, in response to the Obama-Biden Transition Health Policy Team's call for people across the nation to gather in their communities to discuss health care, and to submit recommendations to the new administration. A few days earlier, Cleveland Chiropractic College's Center for Health Promotion had hosted another of these community meetings, which I moderated. The consensus recommendations that grew out of our meeting (which was attended by a diverse cross-section of nearby communities on a cold winter night during Christmas week) were sent to the Transition Health Policy Team and are also presented in this issue of *Health Insights Today*.

Seeing and hearing the spirited discussions at these community meetings, I was moved to write an editorial on health reform for *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine (JACM)*, on whose editorial board I have served since it was founded in 1995. It appeared in the journal's January 2009 issue. Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., publisher of JACM (and 60 other health science journals), has generously granted *Health Insights Today* permission to post the full text of the editorial as part of this special issue on health reform.

Reforming Our Concepts of Health

Cleveland Chiropractic College's Kansas City campus provost, Ashley Cleveland, DC, MA, an educator and yoga teacher who is our profession's first fifth generation chiropractor, asks us to carefully contemplate the deeper meaning of health reform. She calls on us to reconceptualize health reform as a process inside ourselves, not just something out there in the external world. Fundamental change must be about much more than changing our doctors, our medicines, or the coverage in our group insurance plans. As Dr. Ashley writes, "we must provide care not only for *all* people, but for *all parts* of the people – for the complexity that is the human being. We need a system that in its theory and practice, its structures and functions, educates people that their lifestyles and behaviors matter not only for their physical health, but also for their mental and emotional health." Holding this vision clearly in our minds and hearts amidst the coming debate on health care reform will be challenging, and we must rise to the challenge.

The Role of Research

As chiropractors consider the perils and possibilities of health reform, research is our linchpin. To the extent that we can document the benefits of our work with patients, we can offer a convincing case for full inclusion as an essential part of the health care system. Fortunately, over the past generation chiropractic-related research has grown by leaps and bounds, with many studies now demonstrating both efficacy and patient satisfaction. In this era of change, no one has played a more pivotal role than Cheryl Hawk, DC, PhD, Cleveland Chiropractic College's Vice President of Research and Scholarship. As an author, teacher, researcher and administrator, Dr. Hawk has truly made a difference. In this issue's *Health Insights Today* interview with Dr. Hawk, she describes the importance of research for chiropractors and explains the college's research focus on geriatrics, prevention and health promotion.

A Book Worth Reading

David Servan-Schreiber's *Anticancer: A New Way of Life* is exceptional. Diagnosed with brain cancer at age 31, his devastating diagnosis changed the course of his life irrevocably, leading this very conventional doctor to explore many options he previously had scorned. With a combination of conventional and complementary approaches, he survived and undertook major lifestyle changes, eventually co-founding the Center for Integrative Medicine at

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the University of Pittsburgh and writing this moving and highly informative book. In its pages, he accomplishes something quite difficult, weaving together a compelling personal narrative with an evidence-based, well-referenced anticancer program for both body and mind.

Health Research Summaries

In this issue, we've also expanded our one-stop health news summaries, which will be a regular feature of *Health Insights Today* from now on. Check out this issue's reports on key research developments in nutrition, exercise, chiropractic, mind-body medicine, and complementary and alternative medicine.

These are exciting times. Work for positive change and enjoy the journey!

Daniel Redwood, DC
Editor-in-Chief

editor@healthinsightstoday.com