

Healthcare Now for All **- A. N. 'Shen' Sengupta**



Let us not get lost in the quagmire created by the multitude of players and options and the most intricate costing systems in the field of providing healthcare. Let us instead attempt to go to the basics and see if we can come up with some easy-to-comprehend and easy-to-achieve solutions.

Some say that Healthcare is no one's birthright. Perhaps. But the Declaration of Independence protects our right to Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. Wouldn't Health be virtually synonymous with Life? How can there be Life if there is no Health? In fact one can stretch the point with a good bit of justification that even Liberty and Happiness would be unattainable if there is no Health. Thus Healthcare is indeed a birthright or in the least, the most fundamental right for independence. It cannot be treated like a commodity which one trades for profit, much like air-to-breathe and water-to-drink cannot be treated as a for-profit commodity.

Health is easy to take care of if we do not abuse our body and mind. We have gotten used to the misguided concept that we can go on abusing ourselves and that someone else, namely a doctor, can undo the effects of abuse. And further, to make things even easier, we can ourselves pop one or more pills to solve any and all of our health problems. Alas, a doctor or a pill can often provide temporary relief. But, unless the underlying cause, the self-inflicted abuse of our body and mind, is taken care of, the problem will crop up again and again. A doctor or a pill can indeed help, but only after we have done our best to stay healthy.

To take good care of our health all we need to do is (1) to remain physically and mentally active, (2) to consume optimal quantity of only what is good for our mind and body, (3) to studiously avoid consuming what is harmful, and (4) to have enough rest so that our body and mind can start anew each day. We can do it. And we do not need anyone else to prop us up, until and unless we have put the best foot forward ourselves. It is that simple. It is that simple. And it is that simple.

To remain physically and mentally active all we need to do is to move for about an hour a day and engage our mind actively for another hour. We should exercise not only our

muscles but also our internal organs and our mind. No strenuous activity or sweating is necessary. In fact 'easy does it' better on our joints and nerves. We should eat and drink, optimally, food which come from nature, as opposed to the processed kind, and stress mostly fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds, for which the human physiology is most suited. We should shun smoking, avoid excessive drinking, and sugar, salt and saturated fats and also harmful cooking methods, like grilling and frying. This is not an exhaustive list of do's and don'ts. But what has been just said should give a starting picture of the way to go. Is it easy to do? Yes, it is. In fact, once one gears up to doing it without procrastinating, it becomes very easy. Experience tells us that thereafter one misses not doing the right thing.

If one follows above principles, there is a very good chance that some of the most feared health problems will go away automatically. Obesity, cancer, diabetes, heart-disease, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, and more, may become a thing of the past. The great reason for hope is that being healthy could take as little as three months and as much as one year, in most cases. If it sounds too simple, it is because it is simple. We have become so used to the prevalence of these deadly diseases that we cannot think of a situation in which we are largely free from them and that too without having to depend on anyone else or popping pills and without having to go broke to pay for Healthcare.

There is an unfortunate tendency to portray all non-allopathic medicine as quackery at the worst and 'alternative medicine' at best, and that too with accompanying dire warnings of one kind or another. Yet, progressively people in general and even many MDs are accepting the beneficial effects of Yoga, Meditation, Tai-Chi, Acupuncture, Ayurveda (which incorporates some of the aforesaid) and other medical systems, which unlike the failed Vioxx etc. have been tested and retested over at least 5000 years. The main reason for this tendency is quite obviously the fear among the for-profit interests that people will lean towards the so-called 'alternative medicine'. This same fear-mongering tendency is evident in labeling systems in other countries, including even Canada, as failures. The ultimate loser is the general public.

If the majority of people are healthy then there is a significant reduction in the demand for Healthcare. That is the surest and least painful way to bring down the cost. Will such a situation create havoc for the Health-for-profit industry? Indeed not. First of all there is a great shortage of well-qualified medical personnel, not only in USA but world over. Secondly, there should be a turn toward producing health-giving products and educating people about good health practices. It is inconceivable that a healthy population living in a health-giving environment will not bring more prosperity than an unhealthy one. It has been said at the outset that we have to be free from the quagmire of the present intricate costing system. One can indeed work out a favorable cost-benefit scenario if one takes into consideration, not only the tangibles but also the intangibles, such as Happiness.

The best Healthcare is when there is no need for Care.