

Become a healthcare consumer

It is becoming more and more apparent that the US healthcare system has its share of problems from many different perspectives. The statistics are alarming, especially since we all rely on this system at some point in our lives. Here are some disturbing facts compiled by the Nutrition Institute of America (NIA):

1. The number of people having in-hospital adverse reactions to prescribed drugs each year is 2.2 million.

2. The number of unnecessary antibiotics prescribed annually for viral infections is 20 million per year.

3. The number of unnecessary medical and surgical procedures performed annually is 7.5 million per year.

4. The number of people exposed to unnecessary hospitalization is 8.9 million per year.

5. The most stunning statistic is the number of deaths caused by conventional medicine...an

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By: Dr. James Proodian

astounding 783,936 per year! That's almost 800,000 people who die unnecessarily each and every year. By contrast, the number of deaths attributable to heart disease in 2001 was about 700,000, while the number of deaths attributable to cancer was about 550,000.

With this article is a table which breaks down those 783,936 deaths caused by medical intervention, and the costs associated with those deaths:

The NIA, a nonprofit health organization that has sponsored independent research for the past 30 years, commissioned an independent review of the quality of

“government approved” medicine. The startling findings of this meticulous study indicate that conventional medicine is the leading cause of death in the United States.

To support its bold claim that conventional medicine is America's number one killer, the Nutrition Institute of America mandated that every count in this “indictment” of US medicine be validated by published, peer-reviewed scientific studies.

The US healthcare system spent \$1.6 TRILLION in 2003, representing 14% of the nation's gross national product.

Considering this enormous expenditure, we should have the best medicine in the world. Careful and objective review, however, shows we are doing the opposite.

In the coming weeks I will publish more information on this study, which leads me to my final point — a point I have been making for as long as I've been in practice. We all need to be “Healthcare Consumers.” Just as we are wary of dealing with a less-than-honest used car salesman, we should also lend a critical eye to who is diagnosing and treating us.

As a “physician,” the most important part of my job is to render a proper diagnosis before outlining a treatment plan. The treatment I most typically begin with is the least invasive and most likely to be natural. If the success of the treatment is minimal, then I will recommend more invasive procedures or the intervention of a medical specialist. The success of Chiropractic, Nutrition, Exercise, Homeopathy, Acupuncture, Physical Therapy, Massage Therapy, and other forms of natural healing is overwhelming. But take CAUTION: shop for your healthcare provider carefully! I have seen plenty of bad Chiropractors in my career, as with any other profession.

As much as these statistics are alarming, I believe that they can be used in a positive way by starting to change the way we think about our health. Avoiding the use of medication and surgery starts with being better educated, and then utilizing a more natural approach to achieving better health. Prevention of illness and disease starts with you and taking steps to build a team of healthcare professionals, including those who practice with natural methods.

We have the greatest emergency care in the world, but “emergency care” and “health

care” are two very different things. We should all be thankful for the advancement of medical technology within our emergency rooms that saves many lives every day. The difference is that outside of that form of medical treatment lies “Healthcare” for non-emergency issues. This is the type of healthcare that we more typically utilize when we have checkups and/or do not “feel good.” As an educated Healthcare Consumer, remember you have options for yourself and your family.

To read more about the NIA's study, please visit their website at www.nutritioninstituteofamerica.org. And as always, if there anything I can do for you...just ask.



Dr. James Proodian is an author, educator, and healthcare practitioner specializing in Chiropractic Rehabilitation and other natural healing techniques. He also provides free health lectures and screenings for companies, clubs, community and church groups, and other organizations in the local area. Dr. Proodian can be reached at his practice, Natural Healthcare Center of West End, at 732-222-2219.

Estimated annual mortality and economic cost of medical intervention

Condition	Deaths	Cost
Adverse Drug Reactions	106,000	\$12 Billion
Medical Error	98,000	\$2 Billion
Bedsore	115,000	\$55 Billion
Infection	88,000	\$5 Billion
Malnutrition	108,800	
Unnecessary Procedures	37,136	\$122 Billion
Outpatients	199,000	\$77 Billion
Surgery-Related	32,000	\$9 Billion
Total	783,936	\$282 Billion

Become a Healthcare Consumer - Part 2

In my last article, *Become a Healthcare Consumer*, I cited research performed by the Nutrition Institute of America (NIA), which revealed that the leading cause of death in the US is conventional medicine. An alarming 783,936 people died in 2001 by a host of medical errors. In that article I stressed that we need to focus on change. Lets begin this week with a continuation of some vital points.

Is American Medicine Working?

Medicine is not taking into consideration the following critically important aspects of a human organism: (1) stress and how it affects the immune system and life processes; (2) insufficient exercise; (3) excessive caloric intake; (4) highly processed and denatured foods grown in denatured and chemically damaged soil; and (5) exposure to tens of thousands of environmental toxins. Instead of minimizing these disease-causing factors, we cause more illness through medical technology, diagnostic testing, overuse of medical and surgical procedures, and overuse of pharmaceutical drugs. The huge disservice of this

therapeutic strategy is the result of little effort or money being spent on PREVENTING disease.

As little as 5 percent, and probably not more than 20 percent of harmful iatrogenic acts (meaning "caused by a physician") are ever reported. This implies if medical errors were completely and accurately reported, we would have an annual iatrogenic death toll much higher than 783,936. What we must deduce from this report is that medicine is in need of reform. We are fully aware of what stands in the way of change — powerful pharmaceutical and medical technology companies, along with other powerful groups with enormous vested interests in the "business" of medicine. You only have to look at the people who make up the hospital, medical, and government health advisory boards to see the conflict of interest — conflict that the public is mostly unaware of.

In a *New England Journal of Medicine* study, an alarming one in four patients suffered observable side effects from the more than 3.4 billion prescription drugs filled in 2002. One of the doctors who produced the study was interviewed by Reuters and commented, "With these 10-

minute appointments, it's hard for the doctor to get into whether the symptoms are bothering the patients." The drugs with the worst record of side effects were selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSIs), nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), and calcium-channel blockers.

Medicating Our Feelings

Patients seeking a more joyful existence and relief from worry, stress, and anxiety often fall victim to the messages endlessly seen or heard on TV, radio, and in magazines. Often, instead of gaining relief, they fall victim to the myriad of iatrogenic side effects of antidepressant medication. A whole generation of antidepressant users has been created from young people growing up on Ritalin. As adults, these medicated youth reach for alcohol, drugs, or even street drugs to cope. According to JAMA, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, "Ritalin acts much like cocaine." Persuasive marketing of mood-modifying drugs such as Prozac and Zoloft presents them as not only socially acceptable, but almost a necessity in today's stressful world.

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To reach the widest audience possible, drug companies are no longer just targeting medical doctors with their marketing of antidepressants. By 1995, drug companies had tripled the amount of money allotted to direct advertising of prescription drugs to consumers. The majority of this money is spent on seductive television ads. From 1996 to 2000, spending rose from \$791 million to nearly \$2.5 billion...and this \$2.5 billion represents only 15 percent of the total pharmaceutical industry advertising budget.

This week I highlighted some commonly used medications that can serve a purpose in some people's lives. But the bigger question is, are they right for you? And are they being used by too many? The fact that our healthcare system is not spending enough money on the prevention of disease, and continues to spend enormous amounts to promote the use of pharmaceuticals, leaves me with a question for you...when do you start learning

about natural healthcare alternatives that can benefit not only your quantity of years, but more importantly, your quality of years?

* * *

I hope you enjoyed this second part of the three part series on *Becoming a Healthcare Consumer*. In the next and final part, I will continue with more facts and figures about our healthcare system, and some common-sense recommendations that we can all implement.

To read more about the NIA's study, please visit their website at www.nutritioninstituteofamerica.org. And as always, if there anything I can do for you...just ask.

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Become a Healthcare Consumer: Part 3

In my last two articles, Become a Healthcare Consumer Parts 1 and 2, I cited research performed by the Nutrition Institute of America (NIA), which revealed that the leading cause of death in the US is conventional medicine. An alarming 783,936 people died in 2001 by a host of medical errors. In those articles I stressed that we need to focus on change. Let's now look at some more key points:

The Problem with Antibiotics

Most people involved with alternative medicine have known about the dangers of antibiotic overuse for decades. Finally the government is focusing on the problem, yet it is spending only a minuscule amount of money on an iatrogenic (doctor caused) epidemic that is costing billions of dollars and thousands of lives. The CDC warns that 90 percent of upper respiratory infections, including children's ear infections, are viral and that antibiotics do not treat viral infections. More than 40 percent of approximately 50 million prescriptions for antibiotics written each year in physicians' offices are inappropriate.

Unnecessary Surgical Procedures

In 1974, 2.4 million unnecessary surgeries were performed, resulting in 11,900 deaths at a cost of \$3.9 billion. In 2001, 7.5 million unnecessary surgical procedures were performed, resulting in 37,136 deaths at a cost of \$122 billion (using 1974 dollars).

In 1995, researchers conducted a similar analysis of back surgery procedures using the 1974 "unnecessary surgery percentage" of

17.6. Testifying before the Department of Veterans Affairs, they estimated that of the 250,000 back surgeries performed annually in the US at a hospital cost of \$11,000 per patient, the total number of unnecessary back surgeries approaches 44,000, costing as much as \$484 million.

Like prescription drug use driven by television advertising, unnecessary surgeries are escalating. Media-driven surgery such as gastric bypass for obesity "modeled" by Hollywood celebrities, seduces obese people to think this route is safe and sexy. Unnecessary surgeries, have even been marketed on the Internet. A study done in Spain declares that 20-25 percent of total surgical practice represents unnecessary operations.

An Honest Look at US Healthcare

In 1978, the US Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) reported: "Only 10-20 percent of all procedures currently used in medical practice have been shown to be efficacious by controlled trial." In 1995, the OTA compared medical technology in eight countries (Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK and the US) and again noted that few medical procedures in the US have been subjected to clinical trial. It also reported that US infant mortality was high and life expectancy low, compared to other developed countries.

Although almost 10 years old, much of what was written in the OTA report holds true today. The report blames the high cost of American medicine on the med-

ical free-enterprise system and failure to create a national health care policy. It attributes the government's failure to control health care costs to market incentives and profit motives inherent in the current financing and organization of health care, which includes such interests as private health insurers, hospital systems, physicians, and the drug and medical-device industries. "Health Care Technology and its Assessment in Eight Countries" is the last report prepared by the OTA, which was disbanded in 1995. It also is perhaps the US government's last honest, detailed examination of the nation's health care system.

Women's Experience in Medicine

1. Thousands of prophylactic mastectomies are performed annually.

2. One-third of US women have had a hysterectomy before menopause.

3. Women are prescribed drugs more frequently than are men.

4. Women are given potent drugs for disease prevention, which results in disease substitution, due to side effects.

5. Fetal monitoring is unsupported by studies and not recommended by the CDC. It confines women to a hospital bed and may result in a high incidence of cesarean section.

6. Normal processes such as menopause and childbirth have been heavily "medicalized".

7. Synthetic hormone replacement therapy (HRT) does not prevent heart disease or dementia, but rather increases the risk of breast cancer, heart disease, stroke and gall bladder attack.

In 1983, 809,000 cesarean sections (21 percent of live births) were performed in the US, making it the nation's most common obstetric-gynecologic (OB/GYN) surgical procedure. The second most common OB/GYN operation was hysterectomy (673,000), followed by diagnostic dilation and curettage of the uterus (632,000). In 1983, OB/GYN procedures represented 23 percent of all surgery completed in the US.

In 2001, cesarean section is still the most common OB/GYN surgical procedure. Approximately 4 million births occur annually, with 24 percent (960,000) delivered by cesarean section. In the Netherlands, only 8 percent of births are delivered by cesarean section. This suggests 640,000 unnecessary cesarean sections — entailing three to four times higher mortality and 20 times greater morbidity than vaginal delivery — are performed annually in the US.

I hope you enjoyed this three part series on Becoming a Healthcare Consumer. I did not print this series to bash our healthcare system, but did so to show relevant and factual data that affects all of our families and us. As the father of three with a fourth on the way, my job as a father is to protect and provide for my children. As a healthcare provider, my job is to diagnose, treat, protect, and provide for my patients. I believe patients need to be more aware of the facts surrounding the system that provides healthcare to us all.

I promised some easy to implement life changes this week. Here they are:

1. Be pro-active with your

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health. Spend time researching conditions before accepting the treatment for the condition. The Internet is a great source of information.

2. Eat whole foods. If you can't pick it, grow it, hunt it, or catch it ... don't eat it. Avoid man-made and processed foods.

3. Drink plenty of water.

4. Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine.

5. Eat a well balanced diet, with smaller meals more frequently.

6. Get good quality sleep. We repair and rejuvenate while we sleep.

7. Perform stress management techniques such as meditation, breathing, visualization, etc.

8. Exercise regularly.

9. See a physician skilled in numbers 1-8 above.

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