Moving the Nation Away from a Health Care System Focused on Sickness and Disease to One Focused on Wellness and Prevention

Martin Scott, D.O.

Health Policy Fellowship 2011-2012

The United States spends more than $2.5 trillion on health care each year, but invests just four cents out of every dollar in prevention and public health, despite studies showing that disease prevention can effectively improve health and reduce health care spending. Chronic diseases are this century’s epidemic; they currently affect almost half of Americans and account for two-thirds of all deaths in the United States. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) includes a Health Prevention Strategy (Section 2713) to move the nation away from a health care system focused on sickness and disease to one focused on wellness and prevention. This policy could have significant impact in improving health and reducing long term costs.

The National Prevention, Health Promotion, and Public Health Council (NPC) Strategy includes the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF). The fund appropriated $5 billion for fiscal years 2010 through 2014 and $2 billion for each subsequent fiscal year to support prevention and public health programs. Rep. Joseph Pitts (R-PA) proposed H.R. 1217 to repeal the Prevention and Public Health Fund, and this year Sen. Alexander Lamar (R-TN) sponsored the Interest Rate Reduction Act/S. 2366 which would repeal funding for the PPHF and use that money to prevent increasing interest rates on student loans.

The Prevention and Public Health Fund is essential to create programs and legislation encouraging healthy lifestyles as a means of preventing chronic diseases. This brief provides objective research to enable the reader to formulate a decision of the benefits of supporting continuance of the Health Prevention Strategy (Section 2713).