Prevention is the Cure
Moving the nation away from sickness and disease to wellness and prevention

Martin Scott, D.O.
Health Policy Fellowship 2011-2012
“A healthy diet, regular exercise and no smoking has been estimated to eliminate 80% of heart disease and 70% of some cancers.”

Walter Willett M.D.
Chronic Disease Epidemic

- Affects almost half of Americans and accounts for two-thirds of all deaths

Smoking, high blood pressure, overweight-obesity, physical inactivity, and high salt intake

Cardiovascular disease, stroke, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and diabetes.

An overwhelming majority of programs focusing on adults are **NOT targeted at**

obesity, nutrition, or physical fitness  
They are instead focused on  
specific diseases resulting from obesity  
rather than reducing obesity itself.
US Health Care Costs

80% of all health care dollars spent on chronic disease - over $1.5 trillion per year.
Affordable Care Act Health Prevention Strategy

- **Section 2713** aims to move the nation away from a health care system focused on *sickness and disease* to one focused on wellness and prevention.

National Prevention, Health Promotion, and Public Health Council (NPC) Strategy

Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF)
Public Health Fund (PPHF)

Appropriated $5 billion for fiscal years 2010 through 2014 and $2 billion for each subsequent fiscal year to support prevention and public health programs.

- **2010**: allocated $1 billion in funds from the 2010 Prevention and Public Health Fund to pay for programs to support activities such as community initiatives and the development of the public health infrastructure that can help prevent disease and illness.

- **2011**: $750 million in new funding was dedicated to expanding prevention initiatives in community prevention, clinical prevention, public health infrastructure, and research and tracking.
Efforts to Repeal the Fund


- In 2012, 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 need for obesity education

- More than one-third of all adults do not meet recommendations for aerobic physical activity based on the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.
- Fewer than 22% of high school students and only 24% of adults reported eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day. (2007)

One study found that the cost of heart disease treatment could be reduced by $5.6 billion if just 10% of Americans began walking regularly.
One in three people born in 2000 will get Type II diabetes. As a result of obesity, a twenty-year-old man could experience a 17% reduction in life expectancy. If trends continue, children’s life spans may be shorter than those of their parents for the first time in a century.
Age-adjusted Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Were Obese or Who Had Diagnosed Diabetes

**Obesity (BMI ≥30 kg/m²)**

- **1994**
- **2000**
- **2008**

- No Data
- <14.0%
- 14.0-17.9%
- 18.0-21.9%
- 22.0-25.9%
- ≥26.0%

**Diabetes**

- **1994**
- **2000**
- **2008**

- No Data
- <4.5%
- 4.5-5.9%
- 6.0-7.4%
- 7.5-8.9%
- ≥9.0%

Cost of Treating Obesity-Related Chronic Disease

Total Costs (direct and indirect)
$69 - $117 billion per year

Obesity among Medicare beneficiaries doubled between 1987 and 2002

Spending dedicated to treating obese beneficiaries tripled, jumping from 9.4% to 25% of total Medicare spending.

If Americans continue to gain weight, cost the USA about $344 billion by 2018
The cost of obesity has the potential to become catastrophic and unaffordable unless all sectors of society take the need for obesity prevention seriously and act responsibly.”

Daniel R. Glickman, Chairman

Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention, Solving the Weight of the Nation
The Physician’s Role in Prevention

- Clinicians screen all adult patients for obesity and intervene with those with BMI $\geq 30$ kg/m$^2$
- Enhanced weigh-loss counseling helped 1/3 of obese patients achieve long term, clinically meaningful weight loss

Physicians lack sufficient resources and adequate compensation

- The ACA provides compensation for providing preventive services in the doctors' office.
Prevention Works

- “Employer-based wellness initiatives may not only improve health, but may also result in substantial savings over even short-run horizons.”

- “The major opportunity for economic impact is keeping low-risk employees from moving into higher-risk categories.” (University of Michigan)

- Medical costs fall by about $3.27 for every dollar spent on wellness programs and that absenteeism costs fall by about $2.73 for every dollar spent.
Bipartisan Support for Prevention

- 76% of Americans support increased investments in prevention programs to help people make healthier choices.

  86% of Democrats

  71% of Republicans

  70% of Independents
**US Prevention Task Force**

**LEVEL A**
High certainty of benefit, i.e. the available evidence usually includes consistent results from well-designed, well-conducted studies in representative primary care populations.

Category A recommendations include tobacco use counseling, blood pressure screening, aspirin use in select individuals, cholesterol and colorectal screening, and STD screening in pregnant females.

**LEVEL B**
Both diabetes and obesity screening.

**LEVEL D**
(moderate to high certainty of no net benefit)

**LEVEL I**
(insufficient to assess benefit).
“Whether any preventive measure saves some money or is a reasonable investment, despite adding to cost, depends entirely on the particular intervention and specific population in question.”

“… Slightly fewer than 20% of the services that were examined save money, while the rest add cost.”

“… If preventive strategies are to achieve their full potential, ways must be found to reduce the costs and deliver prevention activities more efficiently.”

Tufts New England Medical Center
Stakeholders

“The Affordable Care Act (P.L. 111-148) will facilitate significant changes in our health care system. The new law places a renewed emphasis on delivery system reforms that promote primary care and prevention, and begins the process of slowing the escalating costs of health care for individuals, payers, and the federal government.”

American Osteopathic Association

“We strongly support Section 2713. Coverage of preventive services ... represents an enormous step forward in improving the health of our patients. However, ... the Rule does not take into consideration how physicians bill ... or how group health plans and health insurance issuers address payment for preventive services ...“

American Medical Association
Stakeholders

“Last year, under the new law, 86 million Americans received at least one new free preventive service, including 32 million Medicare beneficiaries.”

Nancy Brown, CEO of the American Heart Association

“Dramatic cuts to PPHF would be absolutely devastating to the nation’s health and place a greater financial burden on an already strained system. This is a senseless and purely raw political move.”

American Public Health Association
Recommendations

Chronic diseases require **urgent** attention in order to stabilize and reverse the current trends.

HR.1217 and S. 2366 should be **opposed** so that the Prevention and Public Health Funds can be used for their intended purpose – **wellness and prevention**.

**Passage of the Affordable Care Act, Section 2713**

**A significant reduction in human suffering and health costs**
The Affordable Care Act’s National Prevention, Health Promotion, and Public Health Council Strategy is an important step towards improving the health of Americans.

*Let’s keep this momentum going.*