

Global Health Care Costs and Prevention





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According to the World Health Organization, millions of people still don't have [access to health care](#). For those that do have access, rising costs continue to be a heavy burden. Recent estimates show that 800 million people (about 12% of the world's population) are forced to spend at least 10 percent of their income on health care. In fact, global health care spending is expected to reach \$8.7 trillion by 2020. In 2040, this number is expected to hit \$18 trillion.

People are paying higher prices for medical services, including hospitalization, doctors' visits, and prescription drugs. Medical costs are increasing at a faster rate than other goods and services, and so we need to ask ourselves – why are we spending more on health care than ever before?

Finding a Better Approach

I am all for getting the best care possible, but is the high cost of medical diagnostics and prescription drugs – which are only applied after the disease or condition has developed – the best approach?

For example, let's say you knew that your lifestyle and daily choices would result in a disease that would place you on a spiral of decreased energy, poorer quality of life, and a reduced life expectancy – costing you and the healthcare system about \$500,000 over the course of 20 years.

What would you do if you were simply given \$50,000 today to change that future?

Wouldn't you invest \$200 per month toward better nutrition, amounting to just \$48,000 over that same period?

If not addressed through a more rational, prevention-focused approach, these statistics will not change:

- Worldwide obesity has [nearly tripled since 1975](#). Most of the world's population live in countries where obesity kills more people than being underweight.
- Globally, the number of people who suffer from diabetes is expected to rise from [415 million to 642 million by 2040](#).
- By 2020, [50 percent of global health care expenditures](#), or about \$4 trillion, will be spent on the three leading causes of death: cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and respiratory diseases.

The above scenario of how you would invest in your future is at the core of the issue around prevention. When it comes to our health, we tend to discount future benefits in favor of current pleasure.

To “care for” is to tend to, meaning to nurture and support. Based on the focus of attention in hospitals and clinics, it is clear that we care for the sick, and that is understandable.

However, there is a push for hospitals to care for the healthy – to have a “healthcare system” and not a “sick care system.” But is that the role of hospitals and clinics?

Taking Responsibility and the Role of Your Social Circles

Perhaps we continue to shift the fundamental locus of control to others. Prevention must start with those with the greatest power to impact behavior based on a thorough understanding of the complexity of human behavior. And who are these individuals or organizations with the greatest power for health?

Let's begin with you and your circle of influence. Every day, your actions are impacted by your own beliefs, your own circle of friends, and family who influence your choices. Most people spend a significant portion of their time at work and form social circles at work as well.

Thus, workplace environments that support health is another place for education and empowerment towards health. Finally, our actions are governed in any civil society, so policy has a significant role to play on how incentives are applied to create a healthy environment.

The first step is to educate and empower people with the tools and personalized support to adopt healthier lifestyles. Studies consistently point towards the tremendous impact that [support and structure](#) play into supporting individuals to adopt healthier lifestyles.

There's no disputing that well-balanced nutrition, coupled with regular exercise, is vital to our health and wellness. Globally, [23% of adults and 81% of adolescents](#) do not do enough regular physical activity to meet the global recommendations. Taking simple steps to increase physical activity, such as walking or cycling, can help avert health care costs. It has been estimated that

a 5 percent increase in bicycle trips of less than 7 km (~4.3 miles) would save around [\\$200 million annually](#).

By improving nutrition and increasing physical activity, we can very well help lower costs through fewer doctor's office visits, tests, prescription drugs, sick days, emergency room visits, and admissions to the hospital.

Herbalife Nutrition is on the right side of these efforts. Motivated by our purpose to make the world healthier and happier, we are improving lives with innovative nutrition products and community-based wellness programs. Leading a better lifestyle is a matter of choice, commitment, and support, and at Herbalife Nutrition, we are fulfilling our mission by providing fitness camps, mentorship programs and educational efforts to help people make smart decisions, stay active and achieve their personal goals.

Changing the direction of a global issue such as rising health care costs is a massive undertaking and everyone – from governments and businesses to parents and community leaders – needs to play a role. At Herbalife Nutrition, we are committed to leading the charge and providing a solution to build a better world for ourselves, our children, and future generations.