

Bipartisan Coalition Forms to Make Chronic Disease Leading Health Care Issue

Leading experts and organizations from the nation's health care, business, and labor communities have organized a bipartisan coalition aimed at making the issue of chronic disease the key health care issue in the 2008 presidential election. Members of the coalition include the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Hospital Association, the National Association of Manufacturers, NAACP, Aetna, YMCA of the USA, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the Sheet Metal Workers International Association.

The coalition hopes to challenge policymakers to make the issue of chronic disease a top priority; educate the public about chronic disease and potential solutions; and mobilize Americans to call for change in how policymakers, governments, employers, and health institutions approach chronic disease.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, chronic diseases are responsible for seven out of every ten deaths in the U.S.—killing 1.7 million Americans every year. Chronic diseases are also the primary driver of health care costs, accounting for more than 75 percent of the \$2 trillion dollars spent on health care in the United States.

Study Says Preventive Steps Could Save More than 100,000 Annually

A recent study released by the Partnership for Prevention indicates that more than 100,000 lives could be saved if 90 percent of the affected population utilized five preventive strategies. The new study, funded by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and WellPoint Foundation found that:

- 45,000 lives would be saved annually if 90 percent of adults took an aspirin each day to prevent heart disease. Today, less than half of Americans do so.
- 42,000 lives would be saved annually if 90 percent of smokers were advised to quit by a health professional and offered medications or other assistance. Today, only about 28 percent of smokers receive such services.
- 14,000 lives would be saved annually if 90 percent of adults age 50 and older were up to date with recommended screening for colorectal cancer. Today, less than 50 percent of adults are up to date with screening.
- 12,000 lives would be saved annually if 90 percent of adults age 50 and older were immunized against influenza each year. Today, 37 percent of adults have had an annual vaccination.
- 4,000 lives would be saved if 90 percent of women aged 40 and older were screened for breast cancer within the last two years. Today, 67 percent of women have been screened in the past two years.

The study found significant deficiencies in the use of preventive care for the nation as a whole, with especially alarming shortfalls among racial and ethnic populations.

Health Quiz

1. Of the \$2 trillion spent each year on health care in the United States, how much is attributable to chronic diseases?

(a) \$700 billion
(b) \$1.5 trillion
(c) \$1.2 billion
(d) \$500 billion
2. 30% of the increase in health spending since 1987 is due to the doubling of the rate of obesity during that time.

(a) True
(b) False
3. 50% of deaths in America are attributable to chronic diseases.

(a) True
(b) False
4. Who said, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"?

(a) Jonas Salk
(b) Alexander Hamilton
(c) Benjamin Franklin
(d) Albert Einstein
5. In a recent survey related in *the New England Journal of Medicine*, what percent of doctors indicated they have some type of relationship with the pharmaceutical industry?

(a) 17%
(b) 63%
(c) 94%
(d) 29%

New England Journal of Medicine* Reports Growing Relationship Between Physicians and Pharmaceutical Industry

A recent survey published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* sheds new light on the growing relationships between physicians and the pharmaceutical industry. The report, released in the *Journal's* April 26, 2007, edition indicates that 94 percent of the physicians who responded to the survey report some type of relationship with the pharmaceutical industry. The survey indicates that 78 percent received free drug samples, and 83 percent received gifts including food in the workplace or tickets to cultural and sporting events. Thirty-five percent received free or subsidized admission to continuing medical education seminars and reimbursement for costs associated with professional meetings. Twenty-eight percent received payments for consulting, lectures, and enrolling patients in clinical trials. According to the survey, "the study did not assess the risks, benefits, or overall appropriateness of various types of physician-industry relationships." The report does suggest that "the high prevalence of physician-industry relationship underscores the need to consider their implications carefully."

Concerns about physician-industry relationships have lead pharmaceutical and medical organizations to develop guidelines governing those relationships. According to the report, there are benefits to the relationships, including increased physician education on the latest drugs. The report also points out that risks exist, including "problematic changes in prescribing behaviors, hospital formulary additions, and increased perceptions of conflicts of interest among physicians."

In response to these concerns, the study reports on the development by the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) of a code of conduct governing physician-industry relationships. According to the code, physician-industry relationships should primarily benefit patients and enhance the practice of medicine. Physician organizations have also adopted similar codes. The effectiveness of the codes in protecting patients and improving the quality of health care was not addressed in the survey.

*Source: [A National Survey of Physician-Industry Relationships](#), *New England Journal of Medicine* by Eric G. Campbell, Ph. D., Russell L. Gruen, M.D., Ph.D., James Mountford, M.D., Lawrence G. Miller, M.D., Paul D. Cleary, Ph.D., and David Blumenthal, M.D., M.P.P. April 26, 2007

U.S. Falls in Life Expectancy Rankings

ABC News and the Associated Press recently reported that the life expectancy of Americans had slipped to 42nd among the countries in the world—down from 11th two decades earlier. According to the report, a baby born in the United States in 2004 can expect to live an average of 77.9 years. While other nations have improved access to health care and nutrition within their countries, obesity and a lack of health insurance are believed to be contributing factors for the slippage in America's life expectancy ranking. The report states that longest life expectancy of 83.5 years is in the tiny country of Andorra while the shortest of 34.1 years was found in the African nation of Swaziland.

Illinois is Latest State to Ban Smoking in Public Places

Illinois has joined the list of states that have moved to ban smoking in public places. The state's new ban will take effect January 1, 2008, and will prohibit smoking in public places including bars, restaurants, and work sites. The law will supersede local ordinances that are weaker or that exempt businesses from air filtration systems. Individuals caught violating the law can be fined up to \$250. Businesses could receive a \$2,500 fine.

Trivia answers: 1. b (\$1.5 trillion) 2. a (True) 3. b (False-70%) 4. c (Benjamin Franklin) 5. c (94%)

Birthdays

September

1 – Rep. Joe Straus
2 – Rep. Allen Vaught
3 – Rep. Dawna Dukes
4 – Rep. Dwayne Bohac
6 – Rep. Sid Miller
7 – Rep. John Smithee
8 – Sen. Mario Gallegos
8 – Rep. Garnet Coleman
10 – Rep. Mark Strama
12 – Sen. Carlos Uresti
16 – Rep. Joaquin Castro
18 – Rep. Chuck Hopson
19 – Rep. Tom Craddick
21 – Sen. Steve Ogden
23 – Rep. Bill Callegari
26 – Sen. Royce West
26 – Rep. Rafael Anchia
26 – Rep. Wayne Christian
23 – Rep. Bill Callegari
27 – Rep. Sylvester Turner
29 – Rep. Joe Driver
30 – Rep. Mike Hamilton