

The availability of health insurance has been a hot political topic for years. Employer offered health insurance also determines where some of us choose to work. Many consider acquiring good health insurance to be the most important thing we can do to protect our health. Let me add a little perspective.

First, health insurance is mis-named. For the most part, health insurance does not insure or promote health. It primarily insures the treatment of disease. While many people equate promoting health and treating disease, as I mentioned in my last column, the two are very different.

The most important steps that need to be taken to promote health are rarely covered by health insurance. Many health experts agree that over 80% of the diseases that Americans suffer from can be prevented by changing our behavior. The U.S. spends 2 trillion dollars every year to treat disease, and we take far more medications than the citizens in any other country, yet we are one of the least healthy nations in the world. Our babies have a lower survival rate, we die younger and we suffer longer. It is clear that our prevailing approach to health is failing to achieve the results we would and should expect.

To assure good health, we need to pay more attention to nutrition, exercise, spinal integrity, attitude, rest, and toxin avoidance/elimination. We also need to devote less attention to treating symptoms. We have become so symptom focused in this country that we often believe that being symptom free is the same thing as being well. The pharmaceutical industry has responded to this belief by providing us with an array of medications that do nothing more than treat our symptoms, lulling us into a false impression that by taking these medications we are improving our health.

As a nation we will never improve the state of our poor health until we understand that symptoms are one of the few methods the body has to alert us of a health problem. The symptom, however, is not the problem, it is only the alarm bell. Turning off the alarm does not put out the fire. Just as ignoring a fire will only allow it to get worse, ignoring or suppressing our symptoms will only result in a worsening of the condition that triggered the symptom. The appropriate way for symptoms to resolve is for them to no longer be necessary, because the underlying condition has improved.