

Last week I began a very important series of articles on what I consider to be one of the most revolutionary new approaches to promoting health and recovering from disease that I have seen in my 20 years of practice.

Before I explain it, I need to explain why it is so unique. I have discussed in previous articles how our health care system often operates backward. We focus too much on treating isolated conditions or symptoms and much too little on addressing why we develop disease in the first place.

Most diseases develop in a predictable manner. Most start with something that happens to us or that we do to ourselves. This creates some type of malfunction which in time leads to disease. When we decide to seek treatment, typically we only treat the disease and not the underlying malfunction. As a result we often never fully recover. We might think we have recovered, but the effects of that original malfunction lead to other problems, sometimes years later.

Over the next few weeks I am going to share some typical examples of this process. Then I will explain how this approach has led to the health care crisis that we have in the United States today. Finally I will explain how we can change that.

My first example will be with the spine, since that is something I work with every day in my practice. Let's say that little Joe fell off of the monkey bars when he was 6 and hurt his lower back. The fall caused some minor tearing of the ligaments in his back. He was in some pain, but Joe's mom thinks 'boys will be boys' and is sure he will be fine in a few days. A few days later when he is no longer complaining of the pain she is sure she was right. Internally however, some scar tissue formed during the healing process and that scar tissue is now changing the way one of the joints in little Joe's spine moves. There is no pain, so no one realizes that proper care during the healing process could have prevented the problem.

Over the years, this area of Joe's back becomes more unstable and easier to injure which he does a number of times. The pain after each injury eventually gets better so Joe doesn't think much of it. Once when he saw the doctor for his back pain, the doctor just told him that he pulled a muscle and gave him a prescription to help with the pain.

With each new injury more damage accumulates leading to even more malfunction. Eventually the spinal segment gets so weakened that the disc ruptures. His doctor refers him to a back specialist who then recommends and performs surgery. Although he feels some better after the surgery, he doesn't fully recover and suffers with back pain the rest of his life.

Had Joe's mother realized that he may not have healed completely after that fall and sought the proper care to help restore normal spinal function, Joe might have been spared back surgery and years of pain and lowered quality of life. She also would have saved tens of thousands of Joe's and his health insurance company's money.

Next week I will give an example of how a similar situation can lead to heart disease.