

Proactive Verses Reactive Health Care

It never ceases to amaze me how much attention is paid to the outside of the body and how little is paid to the inside. Simply scanning the magazine rack at the local grocery store proves this point. A significant percentage of the magazines are either entirely devoted to beauty or they contain a significant number of articles on the subject. Even the “health” magazines devote regular copy to six pack abs and buns of steel.

Now there is nothing wrong with looking good and there certainly is nothing wrong with exercise. What is wrong is the imbalance of attention between the inside and the outside of the body.

The assumption most of us make is that what happens inside will keep on happening as it always has and it doesn't need any attention. We can make this assumption because we cannot see the inside of our bodies and we have fooled ourselves into believing that if we feel relatively the same as we did yesterday that nothing has changed.

The truth is that our bodies are different every single day. They are of course a day older. They have also had to adapt and respond to all the activities of the previous day. They must adapt and respond to all the food we ate, the chemicals we came in contact with, the traumas, (both major and minor) that we experienced, and even the thoughts that we had. Sometimes our body does not adapt properly and malfunction begins.

Think about when kids grow up. Every single day a child is one step closer to who they will be and what they will look like as an adult. Every day they look different than the day before, but you don't notice the daily changes, because they are so subtle and so gradual. It is only when you look at earlier photos that you can notice the changes.

Most health problems develop the same way. They develop so gradually and so subtly that you may not feel any different from one day to the next, or more likely, you do feel different, but so minutely that you can't tell. It is not until there is a tipping point in your developing condition that you know something is wrong. That tipping point is when we become aware of a health problem and it is when we falsely believe the problem started.

Next week we will continue to explore this concept.

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Last week I discussed how most health problems develop so gradually that we don't feel the daily changes that are occurring in our bodies. We only feel the developing malfunction when it reaches a tipping point...when enough malfunction has developed to the point that it triggers a significant symptom or somehow interferes with our ability to perform our daily activities. It is at this point where most people begin to become concerned.

The problem with this approach to health is that once we become aware of the problem, a certain degree of damage has already developed. In addition, for many conditions the first approach to treatment is to treat the symptoms only. While this may make you feel better temporarily, it does nothing to correct the underlying condition and will often lead to more damage to the body since the underlying condition is not addressed.

This is where the difference between proactive and reactive health care becomes important. Reactive health care is what most of us do. We wait until a health problem gets unbearable and then we hope to do something about it. Proactive health care is a more sensible approach. In proactive health care, healthy activities become part of our lifestyle. In this way we are able to prevent most health problems from ever occurring.

Most conditions from heart disease to diabetes can be prevented with proper proactive health care. Proactive health care primarily consists of healthy activities include proper nutrition, exercise, stress reduction, and having positive attitude. It also can include assistance from health

care professionals, provided the health care professional is doing more than simply treating the symptom and is truly helping the patient improve and maintain his or her health.

Many people confuse early detection with prevention and the two are not the same. Prevention includes activities that will prevent the development of a disease, whereas early detection screening tests are used to detect an existing disease. There are pluses and minuses to screening tests that we I will discuss in a future article.

Proactive health care is the most logical approach to health. If you this makes sense to you too, then keep reading my column, because that is the primary topic I discuss here. It is also the focus I have with my patients.