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Illness care versus health care: What nurses can do to help?

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Statement of the Problem: Our nation has been trying to solve the health care crisis for decades. Part of this drive is to address the ever-rising cost of American health care. An examination of our health care reveals it is actually illness care. Even with the current preventative care mandate of the Affordable Health Care Act it is not preventative care. Essentially, the preventative care clause only provides for screenings to find signs of potential problems. The current system does very little for prevention. The screening is a step in the right direction to prevent complications, but really is not preventing the disease. Another system must be employed to truly provide preventative care and curb the rising cost of health care in America.

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to explore the diseases that can be prevented with lifestyle changes, and find methods to assist patients in self-care to prevent disease. It will explore real health care that can result in decreased health care costs and a healthier nation.

Methodology: A search using CINAHL, alt Health Watch, Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition databases using keywords obesity, preventable disease, and health care costs. A literature review of these articles then conducted.

Findings: Most diseases, including cancer, heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, strokes, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea and breathing problems, mental illness, fatty liver, kidney disease, and obesity are largely preventable with simple lifestyle changes. The interventions that prevent these diseases are well known, but not employed in our current health care system.

Conclusion: Our current illness care system needs to be replaced by a true health care system to prevent disease instead of treat disease. Nurses have the training and knowledge to effect that change and improve the health care of our nation.

Biography

Teresa Marshall has been in Nursing Education for 17 years. She currently is a Nursing Professor with Tacoma Community College in the ADN program, serves as a Clinical Evaluator for Gonzaga University and Washington State University in their nurse practitioner programs, and is currently developing a global nursing program for undergraduate students to obtain cultural competence in Belize. She has been in private practice in rural Washington State and has observed the health care policy from both the consumer and the provider aspect. Her experience has given her an interest in understanding how to provide effective affordable health care for patients. She has lead teams of nurses to Haiti for five years providing health care training to the local health care workers. She is the CEO of a non-profit corporation specifically formed to provide global nursing education opportunities.

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