



Incoming Congress Urged to Uphold Disease Prevention in 2011 Health Care Efforts !

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, January 3, 2011 — With chronic diseases accounting for roughly 75 percent of the \$2 trillion spent on medical care in the United States each year, effective measures for disease prevention remain vital to a sustainable health care system, the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) reminded the incoming 112th Congress today. IHRSA is urging the new Congress to make disease prevention a major tenet of future health care legislation.

“As the 112th Congress gets under way, it’s expected that the continued debate over health care reform will consume a great deal of political energy,” says Joe Moore, IHRSA’s president and CEO. “We want to ensure that both Republicans and Democrats alike understand and remain vigilant to the cost-saving role that effective disease prevention measures can play in the health care delivery system.”

Since the late 1980s, roughly two-thirds of the increase in health care spending in the United States is due to the increased prevalence of treated chronic disease, according to the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease. And today, about half of all Americans suffer from one or more chronic disease.

Yet, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), chronic diseases are largely attributable to four controllable health risk behaviors: (1) the lack of physical activity, (2) poor nutrition, (3) tobacco use, and (4) excessive alcohol consumption.

Effective health care legislation that removes barriers to healthy lifestyle choices and supports the medical and business communities in efforts to counsel and engage individuals in health-promoting practices are the most cost-effective solutions for stemming the tide of obesity and chronic disease that consume the bulk of our nation’s health care spending.

The CDC estimates that 80 percent of heart disease and stroke, 80 percent of type 2 diabetes, and 40 percent of cancer could be prevented if Americans stopped



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smoking, exercised more, and started eating more healthfully. A full \$5.6 billion in heart disease costs could be saved if 10 percent of adults began a regular walking program. And according to a 2008 report by the Trust for America's Health, an investment of \$10 per person per year in proven community-based programs to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and prevent smoking and other tobacco use, could save the country more than \$16 billion annually within five years.

Many leaders in the business community already understand the financial wisdom of reducing health care costs through prevention. According to the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), studies show that poor employee health habits plus excessive work pressure cost at least \$3,000 per employee per year, and an overweight worker can add as much as \$1,500 per year to a company's healthcare costs—but businesses that operate well-organized wellness programs that enjoy a high rate of active participation can generate about \$3 in returns for every dollar spent. What's more, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce asserts that by incorporating wellness, prevention, and chronic disease management into their traditional health plans, employers see fewer sick days, greater worker productivity, and lower health insurance costs; and it cites one study showing that workplace health programs present on average a 28 percent reduction in sick leave, a 26 percent reduction in health care costs, and a 30 percent reduction in worker's compensation and disability claims costs. Pedometers, gym membership discounts, on-line health risk assessments, educational materials, and incentives for smoking cessation are just some of the measures the Chamber encourages.

“Until we structure a health care system around the practice of disease prevention, America's health care problems cannot be solved,” says Moore. “I strongly urge our new Congress to heed the financial and human value that disease prevention measures can bring to bear on our nation's health care dilemma.”

The Benefits of Regular Exercise

Research shows that physical activity is extremely important to good health. At the proper moderate intensity, regular exercise significantly improves overall health;



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reduces the risk of heart disease by 40 percent; lowers the risk of stroke by 27 percent; reduces the incidence of high blood pressure by almost 50 percent; reduces the incidence of diabetes by almost 50 percent; can reduce mortality and the risk of recurrent breast cancer by almost 50 percent; can lower the risk of colon cancer by over 60 percent; can reduce the risk of developing of Alzheimer's disease by onethird; and can decrease depression as effectively as medications or behavioral therapy — according to Exercise is Medicine™, a global initiative supported by the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) calling on physicians to assess and review every patient's physical activity program at every visit.

About IHRSA

IHRSA is a not-for-profit trade association representing health and fitness facilities, gyms, spas, sports clubs, and suppliers worldwide. IHRSA is committed to taking a leadership role in advancing physical activity, which is critical to America's health and the battle against obesity and disease. IHRSA supports effective national initiatives to promote more active lifestyles for all Americans and is working to pass laws that will help affect societal changes toward a more fit America.



The End !