

# Preventive care

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Running head: FUNDING PREVENTIVE CARE IN AMERICA Funding Preventive Care in America Webster University December 7, 2011 Funding Preventive Care in America Preventive care is an element that is becoming important to not only those in the healthcare field but America as a whole. Preventive care helps to not only prevent but in some cases stop from increasing illness such as obesity, hypertension, and heart disease. Many healthcare officials feel that preventative care is important to the healthcare field while the government does not share their sentiments and thus funds are not distributed equally to areas which assist with preventative care.

Many critics feel that if the government would work with funding preventive care programs, the cost of health insurance would decrease and many Americans would be more apt to take a healthier approach to living.

Preventive health care is measures taken by an individual to prevent illness or diseases that may or may not arise in the future. The American government does not equally fund preventive health care measures as it does the war. With this being said, many health care officials believe that it is important for individuals to receive preventive care.

The whole idea would be to help keep costs down yet there has not been sufficient enough studies that shows that preventive care actually keeps rising health care costs down. Preventive health care measures include services such as screening (ie cancer, cholesterol), vaccines, and other wellness benefits. Currently the government is making adjustments in order to allocate more money into the preventive health care sector and this is partially due to the Health Care Reform Act created by President Obama.

However, as good as this sound, this act has been met with much criticism. The government is still quite hesitant to allocate funds for several reasons: the estimated costs of spending is different based upon the type of preventive care that is provided, lack of evidence to show the effects of a decrease in rising health care costs due to preventive measures, and the evidence shows that the actual cost to implement preventive measures is more costly. For example, a simple medical test such as one that is given for cholesterol can detect if a person has cholesterol.

The idea behind early detection would be to provide patient education in hopes that the patient would not have to get on medication and this condition could be able to control this by eating healthy and exercising. With early detection, the physician is able to assist the patient in monitoring their behavior. This action is presented two-fold: the patient is empowered to take charge of his health and the cost that was involved in the test is minimal thus keeping costs down by ensuring the patient is monitored and does not have to get on medication.

One of the downfalls with funding preventive care is that neither the government or the physician knows if the illness(es) that is being prevented will be costly or not. It has been noted that prevented care is beneficial when a certain group of people suffer from a particular problem, yet it is difficult to target such a group because medical care cannot be predicted and often times many of the patients are asymptomatic. Preventive health care measures can be costly especially when physicians tend to test for

everything and this added cost exceeds the savings which is what they are trying to do.

Therefore, this is a catch 22 situation. Preventive care is meant to save money while the government does not see it in that way. Therefore, they restrict the amount of money that is allocated for preventive care.

Interestingly enough, the idea that preventive care is beneficial; however, when you look at costs in the long run, preventive care may not be that beneficial. An interesting point to note is that regardless of how the government is not allocating funds equally into the preventive health sector, many physicians have implemented preventive care services and started educating their patients.

Most of this is done through a regular office visit; therefore, it does not look like the patient is coming in for preventive measures. Wellness Services Physicians are not the only one that is not relying on government funds to help with preventive measures. Large corporations are equally involved in wellness (Aldana, 2005). Many corporations are offering incentives to their employees. For example, Blue Cross Blue Shield offers wellness benefits to their employees that maintain a healthy lifestyle to include not smoking, weight management, hypertension and high cholesterol management.

This company has even gone as far as to offer financial incentives offset the costs for health insurance. The employees have access to a gym that resembles at a rate of approximately \$10 per month. The employees have access to a personal trainer to help them with their weight management. BCBS have a health care team which visits the site and gives blood tests to

determine their cholesterol level, hypertension, and smoking. This incentive allows employees to be seen for free and receive the proper treatment for free.

To add more to this plan, the company gives the employee that meet the requirements for “ a healthy lifestyle”, the gives the employee money titled “ Wellness” each pay period. This is incentive enough to some people to continue to live a healthy lifestyle. Government interaction Great Britain’s Health Committee believes that the government should fund preventive care yet incorporate clear guidelines. The group feels as though the government should fund those with fluctuating needs.

This seems to be an answer to those that are uninsured or underinsured. This committee; however, does agree with the US government that prevention even though is better than treating the symptoms is quite expensive (Great Britain, 2009). According to Masters 2005, even though prevention is costly, it is recommended because the government is wasting money on illness that could have been prevented through the use of prevention and these illnesses can result in lifestyle and environmental risk factor changes.

It is believed that high quality can cost the government more money it is the level of quality care that is provided to the patient that prevents future costs and this is the whole intent of preventive care (Masters, 2005). Currently the government is offering incentives for health care physicians that use electronic health records. The first incentive was for \$144, 000; however, the government fails to incorporate some form of incentive for healthy living. It

is unlike that many physicians will take the government up on the incentives before it is mandated in 2013 for all physicians to use some form of electronic health record.

Many critics of this feel that incentives such as this should be going to help fund some form of preventive services. In an effort to answer the need for preventive measures in America's health care system, the department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is investing \$750 million into prevention and public health (hhs.gov). The funds are distributed into tobacco use, obesity, heart disease, stroke, cancer, immunizations, and patient education. The idea is to be able to target individuals that are faced with these conditions and educate them so that history will not repeat itself.

In order to assure that the funds are allocated correctly, DHHS has decided to disburse accordingly:

- 298 million for community prevention
- 198 million for clinical prevention
- 137 million for public health (health departments)
- 133 million for research and tracking (quality assurance).

The general idea is to work as a unit to ensure that once the funds are allocated to the stated department that the organizations are able to utilize the funds accordingly. Apart from the government not allocating enough funds to go into the preventive care sector, the individual is responsible for their appropriate level of care.

**Conclusion** Regardless if the government is willing to pay for war or for health; it is up to the individual to make sure that they are living in a healthy manner. Many people feel that to live a healthy lifestyle is costly, this may be true; however, by taking small measures, they are able to prevent many

of the diseases and illnesses that occur. For example, if obesity is a problem and this is a medical burden which accounts for over 10% of medial spending (Finkelstein, E. A. et al, 2009).

People that have this condition are able to eat smaller amounts, start to exercise, and monitor the intake of junk foods. By making these small adjustments, the individual is able to help combat obesity and not rely on the government to fund preventive health measures. The same thing that a physician would say to someone that is obese is the same thing that the individual can find online. References Aldana, S. G. “ Financial Impact of a Comprehensive Multisite Workplace Health Promotion Program,” *Preventive Medicine*, vol. 40 (2005), pp. 31–137. Finkelstein, E. A. et al (2009). “ Annual Medical Spending Attributable to Obesity: Payer- and Service-Specific Estimates,” *Health Affairs*, Web Exclusive (2009), pp. w822–w831. Great Britain: Parliament: House of Commons: Health Committee. (2009). *Social Care*. United Kingdom: The Stationary Office HHS Press office. (2011, February 9). Retrieved from [http://www. hhs.gov/news/press/2011pres/02/20110209b. html](http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2011pres/02/20110209b.html) Masters, K. (2005). *Role development in professionalnursingpractice*. Burlington: MA, Jones Bartlett Learning.