

Beginning 2012 With Some Brutal Honesty

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As we begin 2012, I think it's time for our profession to face the direction health care is going in the United States and consider the impact it has on our future. Often when speaking with someone or listening to a presenter, I hear them say something to the effect that people are recognizing the need to seek natural health care and we are headed for a paradigm shift away from drugs. While this is what we would all like to see, the facts point in the opposite direction.

According to the results of a study published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics in September 2011, the percentage of Americans on prescription drugs in a given month has risen from 39.1 percent (1988-94) to 47.2 percent (2005-08). This is not the percentage of adults who used [prescription drugs](#); this is *everyone*. Applying this growth trend, it is very likely that 2012 will be the first year in our nation's history that more than half of the people in our country are on some kind of prescription drug.¹

<iframe width="560" height="315" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/T-PHENbHx8I?rel=0" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>

To view the entire library of *Dynamic Chiropractic* videos, [click here](#).

Looking at the data more closely, we find that as of 2008, in a given month:

- 20.8 percent of all people are on three or more prescription drugs.
- 11 percent of all people are on five or more prescription drugs.
- 25.3 percent of children and teens (under the age of 18) are on at least one prescription drug.
- 52.4 percent of all women are on at least one prescription drug.
- 90.1 percent of seniors (ages 65 and older) are on at least one prescription drug.
- 65 percent of seniors are on three or more prescription drugs.
- 36.7 percent of seniors are on five or more prescription drugs.

Why so many prescription drugs? That's easy to answer. The same study breaks it down by ailment / drug type and age group:

- *Children (under 12 years of age)*: asthma (5.7 percent of children are taking prescription drugs for this), asthma/allergies (3.9 percent of children), infections (3.7 percent of children).
- *Teens (ages 12-19)*: attention deficit disorder (6.1 percent), asthma (5.4 percent), antidepressants (4.8 percent).
- *Adults (ages 20-59)*: antidepressants (10.8 percent), pain relief (10.1 percent), cholesterol-lowering drugs (8.4 percent).
- *Seniors (60+ years)*: cholesterol-lowering drugs (44.9 percent), beta-blockers (26.4 percent), diuretics (19.9 percent).

Looking specifically at the growing trend of antidepressant use, we see in another study² that 10.8 percent of all Americans ages 12 and older are taking [antidepressants](#). Currently, 3.7 percent of our teenagers (ages 12-17) are taking them, with 22.8 percent of their mothers (women ages

40-59) setting the example.

But the above is just the beginning. Common over-the-counter drugs like acetaminophen (paracetamol) have been found to increase the risk of asthma, rhinoconjunctivitis and eczema in children.³ Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs are associated with erectile dysfunction.⁴ Early antibiotic use increases the risk of asthma and allergies in children.⁵ Antidepressants are associated with an increased risk of stroke.⁶ For children and adolescents, 90 percent of office visits are "associated with unapproved usage of antidepressant medication."⁷

Finally, a recent study found that expectant mothers who take antidepressants within the year before their babies are born increase the likelihood that the babies will be born with autism. The study found that the risk of a baby being born autistic more than doubled if the mother took antidepressants within a year of the child's birth. For those mothers who took antidepressants during their first trimester of pregnancy, their babies were almost four times more likely to be born autistic compared to babies of mothers who did not take antidepressants.⁸

So, even in a limited review of these common drugs, we can easily see that their side effects cause ailments for which *more* drugs are generally prescribed. God only knows what impact the growing list of [vaccinations](#) is having on our nation's health – not to mention the list of drugs prescribed to offset *their* side effects / complications. (The saddest part is that we may never know because researchers may not be able to identify a viable "not vaccinated" group for comparison.)

With annual sales of almost \$300 billion in the U.S. alone, the drug industry has more than enough muscle to keep this trend going. And with modern medicine essentially equipped with only a scalpel or a prescription pad, the future is depressingly obvious.

Contrast all this with the changes in the use of dietary supplements in the U.S. over the past decade. Supplement use grew from 42.1 percent of adults (ages 20 and older) in 1988-94 to 52.3 percent (1999-02), but then fell to 50.9 percent (2005-08). As you study the numbers, you find that fewer men and women under 45 years of age are taking supplements compared to a few years earlier. More of those ages 45 and older are taking their supplements.

The good news is that with our country seriously in debt, there is an opportunity for the economic benefits to outweigh the political control that keeps us in our current stranglehold. An increasing number of studies are looking at the side effects of these drugs and their potential cost. Perhaps one day we will see a 10- or 20-year comparison of chiropractic patients who lived drug-free vs. those who followed the medical model (i.e., most of the population).

Chiropractic as a profession continues to run opposite to the current trend of drug use, despite ongoing efforts in several states to allow for prescriptive privileges by qualified DCs. It is likely that we will be going against the current for several years to come – until new research confirms what we have been saying for over a century. Will the pendulum swing back? Yes, I believe it will, but maybe not as soon as we hope. Generally speaking, Americans are lazy when it comes to their health. We eat what we shouldn't, don't exercise and expect pills to solve our problems, both physical and mental.

The current drug trend doesn't negate our responsibility to set an example and guide our patients to sustainable health and wellness; nor does it require us to "repent" from wellness and join the madness. Drugs are obviously not the answer, regardless of what your patients believe.

What we *are* required to do is to provide our patients with better information to help them

understand the damage they are potentially doing to their own health and the health of their families. If you are looking for resources you can share with your patients, take a look at [my blog](#). Every Tuesday and Thursday, I post information regarding wellness, much of it revealing the dangers of various drugs. These posts are generally short and reference the research study upon which the post is based. You are free to share these blog posts with your patients and encourage them to participate.

Our message about drug-free health shouldn't change. If anything, it should get louder. In many ways, current research is supporting our philosophy. It's there to use in educating our patients.

This is our world. Impact as many lives as you possibly can and pray for the rest.

References

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