

HEALTHCARE: A REVIEW

Life is not merely being alive, but being well. —Martial

AMERICA'S HEALTH CRISIS: HOW TO FIX IT—I am not a physician or a research scientist but I have worked with and/or collaborated with enough brilliant minds in the past decade, including top physicians and scientists from major medical, educational and research institutions around the world such as Harvard and the National Institute of Health, to name two, to know a thing or two about health-related issues. A disturbing trend happening in this country, as many of us already know, is that Americans are not getting any healthier. We are becoming a nation of industrial feedlot. We fatten our cattle with harmful supplements other than pasture grass and we fattened our people with these inorganically fed cattle in the form of hamburgers and steaks. As the old saying goes, what goes around comes around. Whether they are the chemicals that we used to control infection that spreads among the animals in crowded and industrialized cultivating environment or the fatty foods that we consumed each day, the tale of the two tragedies continues to unfold. The days of people making an honest living with their two hands on green pastures are gone. Also gone are the days when Americans had to walk to work on dirt roads flanked by tall trees. We are living in a civilized and industrialized society flooded with dietary supplements, fast food chains, and congested traffic. The twenty-four hour marketing schemes that float on television screens and billboards do not help in our fight for survival and search for longevity. For each new pill that we put into our mouth, each gram of unhealthy fat that we consume, and each step of exercise that we neglected to take, we cut short our life span by an immeasurable amount. We are the most obese nation on earth and the trophy that we are about to receive is not something of which we should be proud.



RICHARD QUAN
Managing Editor

A 2009 article published in the *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians* shows that one in four deaths in this country are cancer-related. Millions of Americans are dying each year from this disease. Cancer itself is only one of the many leading causes of death in America. Other top killers include heart diseases, respiratory diseases, diabetes, accidents, and suicides. Yes, suicides and accidents, the result of high stress. We are so obsessed with burning calories that we forget to ask ourselves why we have to burn our calories to begin with. Why is this nation's obesity rate spinning out of control? Why are we celebrating weight loss competitions on reality TV? The solutions to our current health issues require the participation of all three entities: the consumers, the manufacturers and the policy makers. Unless we are living in a totalitarian controlled government, no one can tell us what to eat, how to exercise or when to rest. It is up to us, the consumers, to enforce a workable regime by which we can abide to ensure the stability of our sacred temple, our body. The basic rule of thumb is to maintain a sense of balance physically and mentally. Creating that balance involves getting the proper nutrients, regularly exercising, and allowing the body time to rest. The body needs time to heal itself and getting enough sleep is essential. There is no such thing as I'm too busy to sleep. To where are you rushing, death?

How we exercise is a personal choice. Whether we do yoga, jog, run, or engage in intimate physical activities to keep the heart racing and the body healthy, it is up to us to decide. What matters is that we do it routinely and not carry our activities to the extreme. Too much of anything is never a good thing and too little of something can prove just as lethal. When we don't exercise or eat properly, we built up fat deposits that could clog our arteries and veins. Cardiovascular diseases and hypertension, two major killers of Americans, are examples that arise from an unhealthy diet and a lack of exercises. While we do our part, it is also up to our policy-makers to do their part, making and enforcing rules that can benefit the society as a whole. This government must pass stricter laws to enforce healthier food production. During my past visit to Japan, I noticed a substantial difference in how foods are served in fast food chains. For example, the selections of Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonalds in Japan are smaller and leaner in content than those served in the U.S. These trends do not come about voluntarily by the fast food chains themselves. The Japanese government had a major say in how its citizens are to be fed before they even allow these American based companies to establish a branch in their country. In the meantime, while policy makers on Capital Hill debate over which healthcare bill to pass, you, an American citizen, must take aggressive steps now to take care of yourself. For goodness sake, get out of the house and walk a few miles instead of sitting on a couch watching TV. It is a rare sight in America today to see neighborhoods filled with people playing outside. The green lawns have become a national pastime for viewing rather than for tramping on. Each front yard may be nice and pretty and each house that lines each street may be sturdy, but the problem lies behind the closed door. Once our workday comes to an end, we drive home in our cozy car, sitting for hours in congested traffic, and once we get home, we edge our vehicle into the garage and shut the door. "DO NOT DISTURB!" the door sign says. That is the state of America. The consequences, if this trend keeps going, are not only costly, but also deadly.