Preventive Health Care

“A superior doctor prevents illness;  
The mediocre attends to impending illness;  
The inferior doctor treats actual illness”.

Chinese Proverb

Prevention is the medical miracle of the new millennium. The aim of the health system is to improve the health status of the community. A healthy population is not only happy and contented population with a good quality of life, but efficient as well in their respective fields. Therefore, it is not only the individuals and family but the State as well which suffers expenditure in managing illness. Thus Preventing disease and promoting health pays High dividends to the society at large. (1)

From promotive treatment, one attains longevity, memory, intelligence, freedom from disorders, youthful age, excellence of lusture, complexion and voice, optimum strength of physique and sense organs, successful words, respectability and brilliance, Rasayana (Promotive treatment) means the way for attaining excellent life.

– Charaka-Sumhita 4: 7–8

Indian is in the Grip of Life Style Diseases. Incidence of Diabetes / Hypertension / Heart Disease and Cancer is a taking epidemiological proportion. Chronic diseases account for 53% of all deaths CHD 3-4% in rural areas and 8-10% in urban areas > 20 years of age. A two fold rise in rural areas and a six-fold rise in urban over the past four decades. 29.8 million People were estimated to have coronary heart disease in India in 2003; 14.1 million in urban areas and 15.7 million in rural areas.

The prevalence of type 2 diabetes in urban Indian has increased less than 3.0% in 1970 to about 12.0% in 2000. 32 Million People suffer from diabetes in India. The incidence of Hypertension is 40% in urban adults and 12-17% among rural adults. 118.2 Million people are suffering and there number is likely to be 213.5 million in 2025.

India has the largest number of oral caners in the world, due to the widespread habit of chewing tobacco. About 800,000 new cases of cancer occur every year. The Overall prevalence of current tobacco use in men and boys aged 12-60 years was 55.8%, ranging from 21.6% in those aged 12-18 years to 71.5% in the 51-60 year age group.

Low levels of physical activity have been reported in 61-75% of women, in urban surveys.

The advancing epidemics of chronic diseases require a comprehensive policy of health promotion and chronic disease prevention. Most of these chronic diseases can be preventive by promoting healthy life style, increase physical activity, proper diet, alcohol and smoking reduction and tobacco use. (3)

“It is never too late to to give up your prejudices.”

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Preventive health care hold enormous promise for the competitiveness of Indian companies and for the country’s economy in the global arena. In an era when the service sector is gaining pre-eminence, the value of the individuals’ employee has increased more than ever before. Employees with specialized skills are the focal point on whose well being and performance, the productivity of a company rests. In a highly competing corporate environment, companies cannot afford the absence of their employees due to sickness caused by a sedentary lifestyle etc. or a poor performance at the workplace due to poor health. Hence the workplace has become a critical place for successful prevention strategies and the employers have an important role to play in changing the sedentary lifestyles of employees by providing a facilitating environment and infrastructure to motivate employees to undertake physical exercise and stress relieving measures like yoga and gym together with regular check-ups and counseling for preventive health care.

• Preventive health care is an important determinant of health since prevention means avoiding or slowing the course of a disease which is essential for a good quality of life. Investment in human capital leads to a healthy and educated populace which is in a better position to contribute to the growth of the economy through its employability, creativity and productivity.

• Thus, for modern business organizations, it is important to
maintain and improve the health of its human resources so that the employees feel that their company looks after their well-being.

1. Preventive health care involves measures to identify & minimize the risk of diseases, & alter the course of existing ones for a healthy & productive life.

2. Preventive health care is an important determinant of health since prevention means avoiding or slowing the course of a disease which is essential for a good quality of life.

   - In a highly competitive corporate environment, companies cannot afford the absence of their employees due to sickness, caused by a sedentary lifestyle, etc. or a poor performance at the workplace due to poor health. Both as part of their corporate social responsibility and to boost their profits, a number of firms are offering preventive health care facilities to their employees. And it is on their performance, productivity and profitability that India's growth potential and global competitiveness depends substantially. (4)

   - Hence, the workplace has become a critical place for successful prevention strategies and the employers have an important role to play in changing the sedentary lifestyles of employees by providing a facilitating environment and infrastructure to motivate employees to undertake physical exercise and stress-relieving measures like yoga or gym together with regular check-ups and counseling for preventive health care.

   - People visit health care providers only when they are sick or injured but they also need to visit the physician when they are well for a preventive health care check-up. Curative care does not lead to the health of the community; it merely helps to manage the breakdown the health. To maintain health the system has to be geared to provide preventive and promotive health and subsequently any deviations from health can be tackled by the curative system at the individual level and by public health measures at the community level. The opening of many large deluxe hospitals has resulted in the affluent having many additional options for health care but the poor in slums and the rural community seem to have been forgotten. It is worth noting that many if not most of these deluxe institutions have been directly or indirectly heavily subsidized from the public exchequer. Most of these corporate hospitals started as charitable organizations and later on converted into business ventures, thus compelling Delhi High Court to remind them of their social obligations. Most of these thrive on political patronage and bureaucratic benevolence. (5)

   - Health is not a commodity that can be doled out to a passive community. People are not currently treated as important partners in the general plan for improving health in country. To be healthy the community has to take a proactive role and the government's major role should be as a partner in health care that plays a catalytic role and in addition helps by providing infrastructure and human resources.

   - A majority of costly and disabling conditions can be prevented with proper intervention and many of their complications can be avoided or at least delayed. Strategies for reducing the incidence of disease include early detection, increasing physical activity and reducing tobacco and alcohol consumption.

   - Improving the health status of the community is desirable not only because health itself is an objective worth striving for, but also for very sound economic and social reasons. A healthy population is not only a happy and contented population with a good quality of life, but it is a more productive population. Keeping people healthy also is cost effective because sickness is very expensive not only in terms of direct costs but also because of loss of productivity. Therefore not only the individual and family but the state also incurs expenditure in managing illness. Thus preventing disease and promoting health pays many dividends.

   “When meddling over a disease,
   I never think of finding a remedy for it
   but instead a means of preventing it.”

   - Louis Pasteur

REFERENCES: