



The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act: A Big Step Forward

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (H.R. 3590) was signed into law by President Obama on March 23, 2010. In addition to expanding healthcare coverage to 31 million currently uninsured Americans, medical care will become more focused on helping people become truly well and avoiding unnecessary treatments. Here are some of the provisions that fit well with the McDougall Program, along with my comments:

 **Support comparative effectiveness research by establishing a non-profit Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute to identify research priorities and conduct research that compares the clinical effectiveness of medical treatments.**

McDougall's Response: Research performed before the 1980s was largely untainted by the food and pharmaceutical industries. Observational studies published in respected medical journals demonstrated the curative benefits of a healthy starch-based diet for diseases as wide ranging as arthritis, angina, atherosclerosis, colitis, constipation, diabetes, hypertension, kidney disease, multiple sclerosis, obesity, and osteoporosis.

Over the past three decades industry has bought and paid for the patients, researchers, doctors, and medical journals that have produced the bulk of the published medical research. These papers are actually advertisements for their products and services. Big businesses have convinced the scientific community that only research performed by a double blind, placebo controlled methodology is acceptable—which means only medications can be properly tested and proven scientifically to be effective. (Diet and other lifestyle changes cannot be blinded for research purposes—whole foods cannot be hidden from the subjects, thus double blind studies are not possible. There is no placebo for food.)

Observational studies and single blind methodology are now regaining favor. In comparative studies the McDougall Diet will easily be found to result in a huge reduction in disease and suffering when compared to any and all medications currently used to treat chronic diseases. (Not just risk factor reductions, such as those accomplished by pharmaceuticals.)

 **Establish the National Prevention, Health Promotion and Public Health Council to coordinate federal prevention, wellness, and public health activities. Develop a national strategy to improve the nation's health.**

McDougall's Response: It's the food! Until the spotlight shines on the cause of most chronic illnesses there will be no real solutions. Recommendations for a better diet, which are currently considered prudent, sensible, and reasonable—such as to eat chicken, fish, and low-fat dairy products—have not and never will in the future bring about worthwhile improvements in people's health. Americans must learn to consume the bulk of their calories from starches: rice, potatoes, corn, wheat, and beans. This is a matter of national security, not just healthcare.

 **Establish a Prevention and Public Health Fund for prevention, wellness, and public health activities including prevention research and health screenings, the Education and Outreach Campaign for preventive benefits, and immunization programs.**

McDougall's Response: Only three measures have reduced the incidence of disease throughout human history: immunizations, sanitation, and better nutrition. Health screenings, such as mammograms,

PSA, and colon exams dramatically increase the incidence of disease and health costs, and at the same time harm people with few, hard to find, benefits. This fund needs to focus on what matters: diet and secondarily lifestyle.

 **Provide Medicare beneficiaries access to a comprehensive health risk assessment and creation of a personalized prevention plan. Provide incentives to Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries to complete behavior modification programs.**

McDougall's Response: The taxpaying citizens of the United States pay for the medical benefits of those who have Medicare and Medicaid. Comprehensive health risk assessments by checking body weight, cholesterol, blood pressure, etc. will only confirm the obvious: essentially everyone on Medicare and Medicaid is sick and in need of a change in diet and a little exercise.


People receiving Medicaid are in even worse shape than the average citizen. In general, these people represent the less fortunate in our society. Due to lack of education and opportunity they eat the worst foods, exercise seldom, smoke and drink heavily, and more commonly use illicit drugs. To add insult to injury, government subsidy programs provide low-income people with meat, dairy products and other junk foods that industry cannot sell on the general market. Thus making Medicaid recipients even fatter and sicker, and medical care even costlier.

Meaningful help for people on Medicare and Medicaid must begin with instruction in proper human nutrition and making the right foods (starches, vegetables, and fruits) readily available to them. How about a food-stamp program that only pays for health-supporting foods?

 **Provide grants for up to five years to small employers that establish wellness programs.**

McDougall's Response: Between 1999 and 2001 I ran the McDougall Program in Minneapolis, Minnesota for Blue Cross Blue Shield—the medical insurance company. During this three-year period, with three different groups of their employees, I was able to show remarkable (but typical) health benefits: weight loss, reductions in cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugars, and relief of indigestion, constipation, arthritis, etc. I was also able to document a 44% reduction in healthcare costs (based on the insurance company's own claims data) for each of the three groups during the first year they followed the Program. I had a similar experience in Lakeland, Florida caring for some of the employees of Publix Supermarkets. Now I am running McDougall Programs for the employees of Whole Foods Markets with all the usual and expected benefits being realized.

Healthy employees work more efficiently, take fewer sick days, are less likely to be forced into early retirement, and spend less on healthcare—all amounting to saving their employers big money. Wellness programs are a wise financial investment.

 **Permit employers to offer employees rewards—in the form of premium discounts, waivers of cost-sharing requirements, or benefits that would otherwise not be provided—of up to 30% of the cost of coverage for participating in a wellness program and meeting certain health-related standards.**

McDougall's Response: If health translated directly into dollars in their pockets then more people would believe it was important. Employees need to share in the financial rewards. Currently, Whole Foods Market has an incentive program that increases the standard employee discount on merchandise from 20% to as much as 30% for Team Members who achieve excellent numbers for body weight, blood pressure, and cholesterol, and for not using tobacco.



Require disclosure of financial relationships between health entities, including physicians, hospitals, pharmacists, other providers, and manufacturers and distributors of covered drugs, devices, biologicals, and medical supplies.

McDougall's Response: Cash is king. It is about time the consumers realize that money always trumps health. Large iridescent signs should headline the conflicts of interest on all products sold. Let the buyers easily become aware of additional motives behind products.



Require chain restaurants and food sold from vending machines to disclose the nutritional content of each item.

McDougall's Response: Not only should the nutrition content be clearly provided on foods, but there should be warnings from the Surgeon General on most items sold to the public in markets and restaurants. For example: "Meat and Dairy Are Known to Damage Your Arteries, Causing Strokes and Heart Attacks," "This Burger Contains Cancer-Causing Chemicals," and "Be Advised: Dairy Products Contain Leukemia Viruses." And the EPA should add their own warnings with environmental labels such as, "Cattle Pollute Lakes, Rivers, and Oceans."

One Big Step Forward

As Vice President Joe Biden accurately declared at the signing of the health care bill last month, "This is a big f**king deal." Finally, government has stood up to big businesses in order to protect and help the people (that's their most important job when it comes to foreign or domestic threats against residents of the United States). Putting aside political prejudices, although far from perfect, this bill was a monumental first step forward. Hopefully, the government and its citizens will continue to hold high respect for the truth and do right again and again.

References: An online summary of the provisions in the new healthcare legislation can be found at [The Kaiser Family Foundation](#).