



## Health & Nutrition Update June 2008

### TRUE CONFESSIONS

Achieving optimal health is an awesome goal, especially when you begin to see the results of your decision to go for it. But along the way, some of us just might have a tendency to “fudge” a little with our commitments, so I will just confess now: **“I was not taking my supplements as recommended for the first six months of my new regimen.”**

I was taking them faithfully in the morning, but due to lack of habit, I often missed a number of evenings throughout the course of a week. As a result, while I noticed some improvement in my already good health, it was not as dramatic as others were reporting. *Then*, I made a commitment to a friend to not only take my supplements without fail, but also hydrate properly, exercise daily, and eat primarily “superfoods” that are alive. The difference went from being only nominal to extraordinary. I now truly believe that I am in the best shape of my life! I lost the ten pounds that I had been trying to lose around my waist. My energy level—already high—has exceeded previous levels by leaps and bounds, as I am continuing my ministry efforts while helping others with their physical challenges. My mind is getting much sharper. Those occasional memory lapses are absolutely gone, with my mind and mental acuity noticeably enhanced. Suffice it to say, I do not think I will get off of this new regimen until they *finally* lay me to rest, hopefully a very long time from now—that is how good I feel!

On the other hand, during my travels this past month, I was amazed by how much people are obviously quite concerned about their health, diet, and nutrition. It was clear from multiple conversations that proper diet, hydration, exercise, and supplementation were already high on people’s agendas for maximizing their lives. While being reacquainted with old friends, inevitably the comments about *how good* or *great* I looked were simply reflections of being healthy and full of life. As an exhorter and encourager, those words were well received—but more importantly for someone like me with my gifting I tried to encourage or inspire others to make the same decisions I have made to be healthy. I am still of the conviction that as children of the Most High, we have a responsibility to maintain our health so that we can continue to minister to others throughout our lives here on Earth. As I told family and friends, I cannot find a retirement plan in the instruction manual that I am using for my life. The blessing of passing on the wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of a life pursuing God’s Kingdom and His righteousness is something that I look forward to sharing with future generations.

Additionally, when I have heard health and nutrition being discussed in diverse sectors of the marketplace, I am convinced that its dynamics are going to expand my opportunities to minister. Can you imagine how much we are going to hear about the debate for universal health insurance here in America during the ongoing election cycle and new administration? This is a topic that will be at the forefront of people’s minds, and could be a non-threatening subject where we as Believers can become engaged in talking and ministering to an increasing group of people. The possibilities seem endless to me, especially when ministering to someone’s physical needs can readily turn into ministering to their spiritual needs. I find this all to be a great opportunity to expand one’s ministry among family, friends, acquaintances, and co-workers!

Here in the United States, in particular, we are a society that is heading toward a disaster when it comes to our reliance upon the pharmaceutical industry, in collusion with medical practitioners and health insurance companies. A vicious cycle has been created, with the perpetual funding almost guaranteed by legislative bodies that are *supposed* to serve the people, rather than the interests of those who exploit government for the sake of profits, as detailed in the following article:

#### **More Americans are taking prescription medications**

14 May 2008  
by Linda A. Johnson

For the first time, it appears that more than half of all insured Americans are taking prescription medicines regularly for chronic health problems, a study shows.

The most widely used drugs are those to lower high blood pressure and cholesterol - problems often

linked to heart disease, obesity and diabetes.

The numbers were gathered last year by Medco Health Solutions Inc., which manages prescription benefits for about one in five Americans.

Experts say the data reflect not just worsening public health but better medicines for chronic conditions and more aggressive treatment by doctors. For example, more people are now taking blood pressure and cholesterol-lowering medicines because they need them, said Dr. Daniel W. Jones, president of the American Heart Association.

In addition, there is the pharmaceutical industry's relentless advertising. With those factors unlikely to change, doctors say the proportion of Americans on chronic medications can only grow.

"Unless we do things to change the way we're managing health in this country ... things will get worse instead of getting better," predicted Jones, a heart specialist and dean of the University of Mississippi's medical school.

Americans buy much more medicine per person than any other country. But it was unclear how their prescriptions compare to those of insured people elsewhere. Comparable data were not available for Europe, for instance.

Medco's data show that last year, 51 percent of American children and adults were taking one or more prescription drugs for a chronic condition, up from 50 percent the previous four years and 47 percent in 2001. Most of the drugs are taken daily, although some are needed less often.

The company examined prescription records from 2001 to 2007 of a representative sample of 2.5 million customers, from newborns to the elderly.

Medication use for chronic problems was seen in all demographic groups:

- Almost two-thirds of women 20 and older.
- One in four children and teenagers.
- 52 percent of adult men.
- Three out of four people 65 or older.

Among seniors, 28 percent of women and nearly 22 percent of men take five or more medicines regularly.

Karen Walker of Paterson, N.J., takes 18 prescription medicines daily for high blood pressure, diabetes, chronic back and shoulder pain, asthma and the painful muscle disorder fibromyalgia.

"The only way I can do it and keep my sanity ... is I use pill boxes" to organize pills for each morning and night, said Walker, 57, a full-time nurse at an HIV clinic. Her 69-year-old husband, Charles, keeps his medicines lined up on his bureau: four pills for arthritis and heart disease, plus two inhalers for lung problems.

Dr. Robert Epstein, chief medical officer at Franklin Lakes, N.J.-based Medco, said he sees both bad news and good in the findings.

"Honestly, a lot of it is related to obesity," he said. "We've become a couch potato culture (and) it's a lot easier to pop a pill" than to exercise regularly or diet.

On the good side, he said, researchers have turned what used to be fatal diseases into chronic ones, including AIDS, some cancers, hemophilia and sickle-cell disease.

Yet Epstein noted the biggest jump in use of chronic medications was in the 20- to 44-year-old age group - adults in the prime of life - where it rose 20 percent over the six years. That was mainly due to more use of drugs for depression, diabetes, asthma, attention-deficit disorder and seizures.

Antidepressant use in particular jumped among teens and working-age women. Doctors attributed that to more stress in daily life and to family doctors, including pediatricians, being more comfortable prescribing newer antidepressants.

Dr. Sidney Wolfe of Public Citizen's Health Research Group said the increased use of medications is partly because the most heavily advertised drugs are for chronic conditions, so most patients will take them for a long time. He also blames doctors for not spending the time to help patients lose weight and make other healthy changes before writing a prescription.

The study highlights a surge in children's use of medicines to treat weight-related problems and other illnesses previously considered adult problems. Medco estimates about 1.2 million American children now are taking pills for Type 2 diabetes, sleeping troubles and gastrointestinal problems such as heartburn.

"A scarier problem is that body weights are so much higher in children in general, and so we're going to have larger numbers of adults who develop high blood pressure or abnormal cholesterol or diabetes at an earlier age," said Jones, of the heart association.

Dr. Richard Gorman, an American Academy of Pediatrics expert on children's medicines, said more children are taking medicines for "adult conditions" partly because manufacturers now provide pediatric doses, liquid versions or at least information to determine the right amount for a child.

The Medco study found that among boys and girls under age 10, the most widely used medication switched from allergy drugs to asthma medicines between 2001 and 2007. Gorman said that's because over the last decade, asthma care has gone from treating flare-ups to using inhaled steroids regularly to prevent flare-ups and hospitalizations. (<http://apnews.myway.com/article/20080514/D9oLDFNGo.html>)

As you can read, American society has **some serious health issues**. Hopefully, we can each be a part of the solution, rather than being a part of the problem. We are each the sum total of all the choices and decisions we

make, given the circumstances of our lives. It is our solemn prayer that you choose wisely what you do regarding your physical condition. **Nevertheless, as my confession admits, even when we make the right choices, we do have to follow through properly with execution.** I have done this, and without a doubt have seen that the results are beyond my greatest expectations. Perhaps now you know why I am compelled to share it with others!

Mark and Margaret