

June 11, 2009

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

According to President Obama, *healthcare* has become a key economic issue in America. And *fitness* just may be the key to America's health and economic recovery.

To do our part toward a "fitter America," a group of us participated in this past Sunday's "Fitness Triathlon Challenge," including Jessica Abolafia, Julie Adams, Ann Andersen, Paul Farmer, Megan Flavin, Adam Francis, Terry Guadi, Michael Harper, Kelly Keller, Katrin Luyten, Lari McAlonis, Andrew Miller, Stephanie Pagliccia, Sandra Sprude, Laura Tibstra, Heidi Roderick, Christopher Spencer, Tiel Welzbacher, Alely Whitney, Scott Wilson, Colleen Zielinski, Drs. Bill Akins, Albert Alessi, Matt Baker, Jesse Haven, Corey Howard, Tom Hudson, Paul Jones, Dan Labs, Andy Lipman, Carlos Paisan, Phil Regala, Eric Vensel, and me.

As we lined up for the start of the 3.1 mile run (which is followed by a 9.3 mile bike and a quarter-mile swim) Andy, Corey and I discussed that Americans could avoid as much 70% of our illnesses if we only took better care of ourselves.

These sad facts have been shared many times: Smoking is the single greatest cause of premature death, followed by obesity. Twenty percent of healthcare costs can be eliminated by stopping the use of tobacco in any form. Many new therapies are available to assist the 49% of smokers who want to or have tried without success to quit. We are the first generation whose children will pre-decease their parents, due to diabetic complications caused by being overweight. Three quarters of Americans are predicted to be overweight by 2015, according to a recent bulletin by Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Stated simply, we can probably cure this crisis by stopping smoking, losing weight, and generally taking better care of our physical and mental health. So why don't we take better care of ourselves?

I suspect that we have been slowly seduced into a sedentary society. Our parents and grandparents walked more. Homemaking was more physically demanding. Much of their work involved physical effort on a farm or in a factory. While our work today is still often physically—as not to mention emotionally and mentally demanding, many of us spend our days sitting stationary in front of computers or at desks.

We are also time-challenged. No one is as efficient as a working parent—no longer, just "working mother." Fortunately, our NCH Wellness Center is available for a modest monthly membership. The hardest part is getting there. But it's worth it, because you'll not only feel much better on the way out—you'll be contributing to your own well-being and the nation's economic recovery.

For our System's part in reducing healthcare costs, we have just completed a most successful implementation of a huge computer system change in the lab. The Pathnet Millennium conversion took 14 months and cost \$2.6 million. It's a wonderful example of how, through increased efficiency and effectiveness, NCH is helping the national effort to put the lid on rising healthcare costs.

Finally, in terms of keeping active, 3,000 colleagues, kids, grandparents and friends had a grand time at our third annual *Fun Splash* at the magnificent Collier County North Naples Park this past Saturday night. When the weather balked on one party date, Lisa Karnes and her team quickly rescheduled. Now that's what I call "fit and ready."

Respectfully,

Allen S. Weiss, M.D., President and CEO

P.S. Feel free to share Straight Talk and ask anyone to email me at allen.weiss@nchmd.org to be added.