

The United States is among the wealthiest nations in the world, but it is far from the healthiest. Although the United States spends more on health care than any other nation, a growing body of research shows that Americans are in poorer health and dying at younger ages than people in other high-income countries. Not only are our lives shorter, but we also have a longstanding pattern of poorer health beginning in childhood and persisting into old age.

America's health disadvantage results from a combination of factors: inadequate health care systems, unhealthy behaviors, environmental factors, social and economic conditions, and the public policies and social values that shape those conditions. To put a number on where we stand in relation to the seventeen wealthiest nations - women come in at 16 out of 17 and men are dead last in overall health and life expectancy.

Solutions exist for many of these health problems, but there is limited political support among both the public and policymakers to enact the policies and commit the necessary resources. Without action to reverse current trends, the health of Americans will probably continue to fall behind that of people in other high-income countries. The tragedy is not that the United States is losing a contest with other countries, but that Americans are dying and suffering from illness and injury at rates that are absolutely unnecessary.

No single factor can fully explain the U.S. health disadvantage and little is likely to happen until we, the American public, become aware and informed about this issue.

One major impediment to health may be that a portion of the U.S. population is resistant to anything that even appears to hint at socialism, emphasizing self-reliance and individualism instead. While some see these as impediments to a healthy community maybe they are really our strength – **IF**, and that if is in caps and bold print, we the people take charge.

While we may feel and look healthy, chronic diseases have a way of slowly developing over years and decades. Being aware of disease indicators and trends and reversing them

before they become a health problem should be priority number #1 for all of us if we are going to get, what looks like a health care time bomb, under some sort of control.

We rightfully groan and complain about the lack of affordable care and with the uncertainty that surrounds the revamping or repeal of Obama Care by the new administration but we need to start taking personal responsibility for our health. I don't fundamentally disagree with Bernie Sanders about health care being a right but with rights come responsibilities! The present health care system is not capable of fixing us it is only capable of putting us on, and keeping us on, the pharmaceutical treadmill. Prescription drugs are not the solution responsible behavioral change is!