

Written by Allan Besselink
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In today's world, the paradigm of health care is based around "going to see a provider for care". Yes, there are certainly instances and circumstances in which this is a necessary scenario. The question I pose today is this - how many health-related issues do we experience that can be readily dealt with on the basis of self-care strategies - if we simply knew how to use them?

Many of the chronic health issues facing our society today - for example, heart disease and diabetes - are integrally related to self-care. "Lifestyle changes" are critical to success with many (if not all) long-term chronic conditions. Along with these chronic conditions, we have another set of conditions that are self-limiting and have their own natural history. Consider the common cold as but one example. How many people get it? Lots. But it has its own self-limiting course that it takes, and with time (and an environment in which the immune system can respond as it is designed), the condition goes away. Another example - low back pain. Who gets it? About 80% of the population if you believe the researchers. The vast majority of back pain episodes resolve on their own - within 2 to 4 weeks. Without doing a thing - other than watching the clock. No therapies, no medicine - nothing.

Consider the concept of "aging" - perhaps the ultimate in "chronic conditions"! How many people get it? All of us! But if we do the things we can do, when we can do them, then "the effects of aging" may be minimized and our quality of life enhanced. Is this a passive condition that must rule our existence? Or would self-care strategies ultimately provide the best long-term option to improved function?

So here we are, faced with many aspects of our health that would be optimized (and many medical conditions that would respond favorably) if we simply applied self-care strategies. "Competent self-care"

would liberate many people from the shackles, politics, and third party insanity of the health care "system".

You can be an active participant - or a passive victim - in the process. Competent self care requires an active involvement. It involves learning and growth, acquiring skills and knowledge in order to enhance the quality of our lives and the world around us.

In an information era, with the "Net Generation" upon us, we have access to technology and resources that we would have only imagined 10 years ago. We have access to vast amounts of information related to health and fitness - if only we could find a way to harness it. The Internet does not have a quality standard - and the lay person is faced with many options.

I would propose that there are certain aspects of "competent self care" that truly enhance your ability to live fully. The core competencies would include self-responsibility, developing an understanding of self-image and its impact on your world, and gaining a knowledge and application of the sports sciences. Add to this the power of mechanical diagnosis and therapy - the mechanical, symptomatic, and functional responses to repeated movements and sustained postures - and you have a very powerful self-care model.

If we can continue to provide intelligent strategies for self-care - then the health care system as we know it will become less expensive and more effective *if and when we need to access it*.

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Better yet, the patient/client will have the personal power to
make good decisions about their own self-care

. And who better to implement the strategies for recovery, adaptation, and life-long fitness than the patients themselves?

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