

Preventive Care and Prevention for Young People

By Benjamin Wagener, on January 28th 2014.

It seems reasonable to insist about the importance of preventive care. Somehow a lot of lives could be saved if some prevention was made where diseases very often settled on the long run. It appears that there is here a question with respect to the common sense of what Health is. The consideration of Health, either mental or physical health, may be a crucial aspect of personal safety. Nevertheless what is quite obvious is that many persons are lacking the knowledge and understanding of what could keep them healthy, what could make them healthier and why for. It is also a key point of Public Health to learn people about the many aspects of the risks they may undergo and of the key aspects of avoiding the issues of risk and of preserving their own health capital.

What appears to me of primary importance and that is why I insist about it in the title of this article, is that it is especially young people that should be taken care in a preventive care perspective. There is a crucial issue here that is to grow up young people so that they can have a healthy life. This is true from a physical point of view and this is especially true from a psychological point of view. About this last point, it seems that there is still a lot of knowledge lacking about education and how to make persons grow in a healthy way. It is especially true that it is very difficult to say what is a young healthy person because of the vast variety of personalities and behaviors that appears during pre-adulthood. This kind of instability may be due both to the growth process and its adaptation-difficulties correlate and to the educative environment, taken both they create naturally an inner conflict.

What seems to me to be a very important of prevention that is very often misestimated is the role of the school environment. Too often it is left to the responsibility of parents to take the entire charge of their children while a lot depends indeed of what is happening at school. From the social environment of children and adolescents to their personal and professional environment a lot of course mainly depends on schools while those may discharge their responsibility about it. This is something I will especially discuss.

My concern here is about the global significance and somehow philosophical aspects of what preventive care is and about the importance it should have in my opinion. Somehow the role of preventive care should be much more enlightened in current Medicine.

This text is organized as follows:

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 - Prospects in preventive care
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 - Prevention is healing at this age
- 3) The Possible Good Effects of a Proper Preventive Care for Public Health on the Long Run
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1) Preventive Care

What is commonly called preventive health care is still a misestimated part of Medicine. Nevertheless it is quite obvious that a good preventive care management could avoid the development of many diseases and is actually a key aspect of Public Health. Currently, preventive health care has been subdivided in three levels. The primary level is concerned with the real prevention of the occurrence of diseases, the secondary about the diagnosis and treatment of already existing diseases in their early development and tertiary is about the treatment and prevention of the consequences and possible development of diseases. What are especially empathized are substances abuses and various kinds of risky behaviors.

I would like to insist in this text that preventive care should be taken even more seriously, in a broader way and that a serious discussion should be opened with respect to all the benefit in Public and Personal Health that such a good Medicine can have as consequences.

It appears actually that the reflection about Preventive Care should be put more deeply and that its organization as well as its management has to be both questioned and answered in a serious way. As prevention may involve various kinds of professionals amongst the public sector, it seems that it may be quite difficult to organized effectively and so that a serious understanding of this question should be much more common in individuals.

The development of a common sense of prevention by the individuals may be one of the key features of the development of that field. It seems in fact that many individuals are lacking some sense of what health is and of the importance it has. This is true even if of course almost anybody has some sense of it but they are clearly missing a deepened and clear understanding of it. Somehow we could say that health is not only under the strict limitation of the medical domain but that anybody should have some knowledge of it. From this point of view we could imagine that serious information should be provided to individuals and, in my opinion, some learning should be provided by schools.

About that last point, I would like to insist because it is something that is important. It could even be imaginable that schools may provide true courses about health. Medical studies are quite long and begin only at a University level but it is imaginable that if children and adolescent were educated to Health questions, a healthier society would emerge. Moreover it seems much more important to teach children and adolescent about Health that about abstract and often out of concrete meaning matters. And learning about questions regarding Health may be much more important for the entire life of a person that learning such abstract things that are very likely to be useless in their life and forgotten. For those reason I would recommend truly that some courses would be given in schools about Health and Medicine, courses that are likely to be concretely more important than many others. Moreover teaching young people about health and risks is very likely to avoid later problems and to provide them with a better life.

This could be the first step towards some serious understanding of what health is in the public common mind. A broader consideration of it seems to be both an important and a necessary step for our future societies. One of the main aspects of the modern era, apart from the technical knowledge we now have, are due to the various discoveries that were made in Medicine and that have made our society globally healthier. It seems that a broader view about it could be only of the greatest benefit for our society by making it even healthier and for this preventive medicine is probably the essential point.

For that preventive medicine should be developed and its scope should be deepened. A clearer view about what preventive medicine is and about its purpose should be taken. A serious reflection based on the fact that a good global prevention would be of the greatest benefit for each one has to be engaged.

When I say that it should be broadened and deepened, I mean that the medical scope of preventive medicine should be understood and studied for the importance it has. It is not only about preventing the issues of drug abuse or of the development of probable and common disease, it should be taken for granted that the development of a common public understanding of health issues may be a crucial aspect of Public Health that has still to be settled. Somehow it is already done, various kinds of information are provided to the public but what is true is that those information seems often to be not well interpreted and that the public is missing what they need to understand it properly. Nowadays from the media and various kinds of information almost anyone is aware of some risks and health issues, information may be provided by journalists by example, the target of information is the mean citizen and moreover information are provided in such a way to be lacking what are the key issues behind. The mean citizen by example, even if he/she is told repeatedly that he/she should be careful and should see his/her Doctor regularly, is missing the key ingredients that could truly help him/her staying healthy and getting healthier. That information should indeed be provided pedagogically.

Those key ingredients are indeed all the information about health and the importance it has at each second of our time, the information about the sense of what health is. This sense, that is lacking to a lot of us and that may be not so obvious to specify from a medical point of view, is something that somehow anyone should have a clear understanding of. Providing a good piece of information about health is not saying what people should do or should not do, it is making people understand by themselves the health issues that are our main concern. From this point of view I would like to insist once more that schools have to provide a real learning about it. We often say that what we learn in school will serve us for the remaining of our life, health is indeed perhaps the most important thing that can serve us, and it should normally be seriously learned in schools. Moreover this missing aspect of Education is by itself a serious risk and appears to be obviously and directly responsible of the later development of various kinds of health issues.

Managing preventive care involves a lot of various professionals. Of course various Doctors are involved and indeed almost any because in any medical situation some preventive issue is behind. The medical profession is then entirely involved in preventive care at various levels. This is something true even if perhaps necessary to say. At various other levels from law makers to the individual preventive care is also something that is indeed quite common even if far from being something very clear in any mind. We are somehow all involved in it but I would like to say once more how much a clear conception of health is missing in the common individual. It then seems that it is truly of the highest importance that some good pedagogical information would be provided in order that a globally healthier society emerges. This requires a serious reflection about health, about what is health for the common individual, and about how to make anyone assimilate and understand better health issues.

About the current state of facts of current Preventive Medicine I would say that, even if there is quite a lot of work done, it nevertheless remains that a lot of persons stay truly unaware of health issues. This is a big problem indeed for which I gave some possible answers above. Preventive care is a complete part of Public Health and citizens should have the full right to be informed of what is essential to keep them healthy. The role of preventing care is clear, intervening before the problems occurs, and from this point of view the best suited persons are the individuals themselves. A preventive care that would fully provide the information and learning necessary for a good public health is still missing but may be really looked for. If we were able to reach a level where anyone would have some knowledge of the issues of health and of care, each individual would enjoy the benefits of a healthier life and globally the society would work better. It may be useful to remind that indeed Health, taken with its whole sense, may be quite certainly our main concern.

2) Preventive Care for Young People

Here I remind various personal histories, either from my own or from the young people I may have encountered. How it is difficult for the young ones to know how to behave with respect to risk, how it is difficult for a young person to deal with drugs abuse while almost anybody takes some, how it is difficult at this age to know how to place oneself and to behave with respect to others. Very often it happened to me to cross peoples of about 20 years old, smoking, drinking and so in quite a bad shape. When I asked them why they behaved like this many of them answer something like “Well, we have only one life, so better to profit of it as much as we can” whereas my answer was something like “That is right, you have only one life, so better to manage it the best you can”.

From my own experience, it appears that many results can be obtained with young people just by discussing them seriously and with consideration about the risks and what they want in life. How often I said to people drinking Vodka by example “Yes and how many millions deaths in Russia because of Vodka along History?” (A real pandemic...).

Seeing a young person that should be very healthy but that is in very bad shape because of some abuse but that do not even realize it as well as his/her pain, is something that touches me deeply.

They are young and they do not know... They do not know what they are doing and the possible consequences it will have for their entire life. But who knows? Somehow everybody does but no one wants to recognize the true matter of facts. Recognizing to have taken drugs, to have made things forbidden, to have broken some laws... No one wants somehow... Especially all the persons that have become important and perhaps just being a parent makes you very important. But the matter of facts is clear, anyone in his/her life has

done so many times, especially during growth where it is necessary to experiment things in order to know what they are really.

The recognition of this matter of facts seems to be very important for any prevention regarding young people. It seems moreover that there is a necessary assimilation and understanding that goes much forward any basic advice or any behavior. Without assimilation it is anyway things that are not truly understood by young people and so that are not effective. Taken both it is quite clear that a good relationship between responsible adults and unlearn young people is perhaps the first step towards any kind of prevention. Forcing a behavior may have some influence but it will not fix the heart of the question regarding the consideration of health issues and even if it does so it would probably create a kind of psychological conflict.

What may be certain for any perspective in preventive care regarding young people is then the assimilation of the Health question, of its importance and of its issues. From this point of view it is clearly missing the essential in current Education. We could expect for parents to provide such kind of Education but this is obviously not enough because the social environment of a young person goes well beyond the family environment and there is here a Public Health issue with respect to the role of the Society and the role of schools in such a necessary education.

The importance of preventing care for young people is high and really neglected. A young person that would acquire the necessary health background in order to drive his/her life well either from a psychological or from a physical point of view would be truly in a good condition. There is here a gap that that the Society has a real responsibility in but that by filling it the society would get the better benefits of it.

Writing about this, it seems necessary to precise my point of view. My point of view is not to forbid or try to avoid at any price risky behaviors because they may be necessary from a developmental and cognitive point of view but better to “teach” young people what they need for themselves to do the life they want in a healthy way. When I use the word “to teach” I use it in a global cognitive meaning, there are things that can be learned only by trials-and-errors but the prevention should rightly apply at this point. Making a young person being able to see what will be the consequences of a risky behavior in a future that he/she doesn't know is an essential point. The thing is that young people do not know, they do not have the personal experience that would tell them what is good or not good for them.

This is the main point: personal experience. One could argue that a responsible adult has as a main difference with a young person lacking experience that he/she has already learned for him/herself all the consequences of the bad experiences from the past. This personal knowledge that we all acquire through our personal history is something necessary but the point about it is that as any knowledge it can be “taught” and “learned”.

This is something that is very often granted to the parental education. Parents are from those that have the most influence on their children. Apart from basic parental education, all along the education provided by parents there is preventive advice. This is about all the knowledge that a child or adolescent is missing in order to drive his/her life. There is behind a biological ground that is proper to human beings. Human beings are not genetically programmed to have very precise behaviors like many species have. The Human Being is especially a learning being. The World by itself may appear very complicated, completely free and opened to a Human Being but there are limitations and within it he/she has to learn by its own. And in any situation this are only the unique personal experience and knowledge that will lead someone to take decisions. From this point of view, the only real possibility of parents is to help their children through those years when they are apprentices. That is the role of parents in education, an essential role with regards to the closeness with their children.

On the other side, and I think this is something that should be developed, there is the role of the Society and of Schools. As said before, this role is too much neglected. A young person has nowadays a very complex social environment. Between schools, relations with other children and other adults like teachers and staffs, and its relation with the Society, the social environment of a child or adolescent in the XXIst century is very complicated. It may have been a little bit different in the past but what appears nowadays is that a young person is completely immersed in the whole World. It is then clear that this new aspect has to be seriously considered in any societal circumstance. For preventive care, it is also clear that in such a complex environment, any young person should be provided the necessary background to deal with it.

It is very often the case that risky behaviors began in schools inside "friendship" relations and then developed inside what can be called the society of young people.

Inside this society, young people are completely unlearned amongst each others about the risks. There is here something that the Society should normally deal with. No one can reasonably imagine avoiding any kind of abuses by young people; such a society would be dictatorial. Taking drugs, abusing of alcohol or tobacco, having deviant behaviors are indeed things that may be considered as normal with respect to its scope and development. It remains that a good prevention should take this for granted, accept it, and help our youths so that such normal stage would lead to good consequences. Tolerance is far from being sufficient because tolerance by itself also means forbidden but common understanding of the situations and of the risks are much more important.

There is moreover something very subtle with respect to such kind of preventive care with respect to the way care is provided. Actually our society can be violent, violence is something that can appear as normal but anyone can be truly damaged even by some kinds of violence that may appear as soft. It is especially true with respect to young persons. It seems that it is very important to make them still feel secure and comfortable. Forbidding by

itself is something violent because there is no real understanding behind. I do not say here that everything should be allowed or that any kind of behavior can be accepted but the fact is that without a real understanding of the reasons why such or such thing may be forbidden or unadvised there is still something missing in the prevention. We can see that indeed, even by example with respect with the consumption of drugs or alcohol there is still a real understanding of the why. We can easily see that alcohol or drugs are dangerous but it is much more difficult to see exactly why it can be so dangerous and why such dangerous behavior are so common whereas both almost impossible to avoid and almost impossible to prevent.

Moreover the impossibility of such prevention is so clear that such consumption is very often tolerated and accepted in any society. The point about it is that even if it is tolerated there is still a real taboo about it and even if it is widely done no one truly recognize it. It could be a good point to begin with, deal with this taboo that causes various psychological trouble and making it something we can speak about. This is especially true for young people when the taboo and the forbidding is too important with respect to parents, family or society, which therefore can cause much more trouble by itself than the actions of such or such drug.

On the other hand, of course, it is not nether the place where anyone would enjoy taking drugs and abusing variously. In such recognition anyone should be clearly responsible of a problem that is common and that anyone is concerned by. Such responsibility is indeed very important. Having taken some drug by example can be much more damaging by the psychological pressure it puts on someone than by the consumption itself. Being aware of the problem and taking it with the responsibility it requires with respect to some life at risk is a key in any kind of such question dealing with prevention.

I would like to finish this part by insisting ones more about the role that schools play in putting youth at risk and the role that school should play both with respect to it and in a more general preventive view.

It is very often and almost uniquely let to the responsibility of parents to grow up their children properly. Well, this is something that could have been so some centuries ago but of course that cannot be considered in any way to be still so. The role of parents is quite clear and I do not want to develop anything about it but the role of schools in the development and social development of children has become even greater somehow, therefore schools have now to consider the huge responsibility they now have with respect to the health and prevention of young people. In absolutely no way a school could consider itself to be uniquely providing abstract (nonsense) courses. The development of children and their social development essentially take place in schools nowadays. As well as parents take care of their children, schools should provide the complementary care that goes with their special social structure. When I say "school", I use it in a broad way to denote from elementary school to high schools and universities. Schools should be clearly aware that by

themselves they put the children at risk. Moreover it is very clear for me and I think that any reader would agree that providing abstract nonsense learning is both far from sufficient for the future of our youth and not enough because children have to learn also what will be really necessary for them in their life. From all what could really serve someone in his/her life and above them all I would put with no doubt "CARE". And it may be partially because there is no interest about care in the educative curriculum that so many young people have trouble. Moreover there is something very clear about the fact of providing hard abstract nonsense even by schools that may be considered as the bests, it is that clearly providing such nonsense clearly put children at psychological risk.

3) Possible good effects of a proper preventive care for public health on the long run

Prevention could be considered in the future as an essential part of Medicine. Making our People able by itself to generate a society that would be healthier is the way that preventive care propose and it is perhaps one of the bests medical issues for our future. Somehow, prevention is at the heart of Medicine. Looked more carefully we could see that the work of any medic is more or less directly linked to prevention. This is a key point that making prevention better understood in its role and purpose would lead to a society that would be globally healthier. Curing diseases one by one when they appear is not sufficient to improve the health of our citizens, a global understanding is necessary for that.

First it seems that Preventive Care as to be replaced for the importance it has at the heart of Medicine. This is because prevention has a double effect. First prevention goes ahead of problems; second prevention is the first step towards cure. Medicine could be organized around such Prevention which is something that would do Medicine better. For the moment Preventive Care is a little bit abroad of the core Medicine in a place where it is divided between medical concerned and societal concerned. Its importance should nevertheless be clear and its purpose and scope should be deepened both for Preventive Care itself and for Medicine. Preventive Medicine should stop been such a subject abroad and be considered for the central importance it has. Any Medical Doctor would recognize that his/her work has to do with prevention but this is far from been so clear in the facts and in the minds.

Second Medicine should go closer to the standard citizen and make the preventive information clear and understandable for its importance. This is the way to make citizens aware and responsible. Having citizens that are truly active and responsible with respect to

their own health is perhaps the key issue for prevention and for a healthier society. This is something that may be understood in the medical sector but that may be not so clear for our executives. Our politicians and other executives should have this clearly in Mind that providing citizens with a way to get healthier would improve the global health of our society and would logically make a better society that would work better.

Third, this should be very clear also, there is an important problem that should become a very serious concern with respect to young people. They should be the first persons that prevention should be seriously at work about. There are many reasons for that but I just would like to point out what I said in the second paragraph that with a proper prevention our society would get better and this is especially true if prevention was actively at work with our youth because there is still a lot to do in order to reach a valuable goal. I insist once more that, of course even if it is not so clear, schools have a lot of responsibilities in it, with regards to the current state of facts and with regards to the possible health issues for our future.

The possibilities offered by a Prevention that would take its proper place, recognition and that would have the possibility to work effectively may be essential for the medicine of tomorrow. Recognizing that yes there is a major health question for each of us and for our society is something that could be seen properly as a preventive care question.

Properly stated and properly done, Preventive Care would provide each one of us with a better health and would provide our society with a way to live together better. Of course that way is not the only one but it is one amongst others that can be taken.

The management of this would first require some intensive and serious work. This is something that may be seen as a key public health issue for our future but that is not so clear just now. Nevertheless that work seems to be necessary and I think many medics would agree with me even if it may look a little bit futuristic. That is a way, a good way, a possible way that offers too many expectations to not be tried.

Politicians, sociologists, medics should normally be aware of that possible issue. There is here something that has certainly the possibility to make our World improve. It is not so complicated, it doesn't require a lot of money but just some reflection and serious work that would permit to make ideas evolves and circulates in our society. This is something that has to be taken seriously.

It is difficult to say more about it because this is something so clear, so obvious and the benefit of it for each one would be so great that this is something that has to be done. If we want to make a serious health step for our society, this step is very easy and is a big one. Each citizen would get healthier, making him/her more able to be useful for him/herself and for the society and making him/her more able to allow a better future for each one.

5) Conclusion

In this article I have raised an important question with respect to our future health. It seems that its answer may be decisive for the future of our public health. This is something quite simple, quite easy to answer if some work seriously at it and of which benefits for our society could be great and deep.

A global improvement of the health condition of each one can only take place if each one is responsible with respect to his/her health. This is something not so easy to do but it is clearly possible. Each one has some understanding of the importance of health but it goes through various misunderstandings and is rarely understood for its true importance.

As I said many times in this text, it is quite obvious that Preventive Care may play a key role in this future. It is still something that has to be looked for and understood because it is still not so clear in the current minds.

I finish on my view that our youth is a population especially at risk that is by itself so healthy that we miss to take care sufficiently about. Finally I would advise that schools (in the broad sense) think seriously to it and that even some courses about health issues can certainly be recommended, this for the best of our children and future.