



## JUNE 2009 TRENDEVENTS

### The Myth of the Efficient Car

<http://www.progressive.org/mag/mpdubro020309.html>

By Alec Dubro, February 2, 2009

Let's get something straight about green industry: in its basic form it means we all have to buy new stuff lots of it. As an industrial policy that will create jobs and increase spending, it's pretty sound. As an environmental policy, it's largely a fraud... Nowhere is it more disingenuous than the pursuit of the fuel-efficient car. In their effort to stave off collapse of their industry, auto executives have continually cited their efforts are building the high-efficiency cars of the future. **The problem is, there are no cars of the future, and the looming catastrophe of global pollution, including climate change, will never be solved by building more cars - efficient or otherwise.**

We'd desperately like to believe that there is a way to preserve our car-centered civilization, while simultaneously placating the gods of atmospheric warming. Even the president-elect believes it, and Obama made fuel-efficient cars a central part of his energy policy. He promised a \$7,000 tax credit to hybrid car buyers, aiming for a million plug-in hybrids, getting 150 mpg, by 2015. He wants to put an additional million completely plug-in vehicles by the same year. And he's willing to federal funds up for research, or at least he was before we lost all our money.

Even on its face, this seems like a tepid response to climate change. At the moment there are upward of 250,000,000 registered vehicles in the United States - more than there are licensed drivers. Converting one percent or so of them to greater fuel efficiency is not likely to do very much in the time needed to

act. Nevertheless, the hope is that introduction of a new generation of electric and semi-electric will eventually lead to a replacement of our entire fleet of gas-guzzlers... **Maybe. But the bigger problem is that increasing fuel efficiency has never led to an overall reduction in pollutants. In fact, efficiency has always led to more production and consumption.**

**But there's an even more profound problem with building more efficient cars. In 1865, English economist William Stanley Jevons discovered an efficiency paradox: the more efficient you make machines, the more energy they use. Why? Because the more efficient they are, the better they are, the cheaper they are and more people buy them, and the more they'll use them. Now, that's good for manufacturers and maybe good for consumers, but if the problem is energy consumption or pollution, it's not good.**

**The so-called Jevons Paradox was resurrected in the 1980s by a variety of environmentalists and is occasionally referred to as the Khazoom-Brookes postulate or the more explicative rebound effect. It's been neatly summarized as, "those energy efficiency improvements that, on the broadest considerations, are economically justified at the micro-level lead to higher levels of energy consumption at the macro level." Or, in short, you make money on each transaction and lose it in volume...The rebound effect is not an immutable scientific law, but it's a widely observed phenomenon and has held true in the most energy-intensive consumer activities.**

The most commonly cited example is in lighting. As the Encyclopedia of Earth puts it, "For instance, if an 18W compact fluorescent

bulb replaces a 75W incandescent bulb, the energy saving should be 76%... However, it seldom is. Consumers, realizing that the lighting now costs less per hour to run, are often less concerned with switching it off; in fact, they may intentionally leave it on all night." I know I have at times.

The same effect has occurred with cars. Automobiles have become more efficient over the years. Led by the Japanese, carmakers have increased the fuel to weight ration, decreased damaging vibration and vastly increased reliability. In the 1950s, a car that lived to drive 100,000 miles was a rarity; today they routinely last 150,000. The result? Increasing fuel consumption. And not just because more people in the developing world are buying cars, either. **People everywhere are buying more of the better, cheaper more efficient cars and - here's the problem - driving them more. And that was even so when gas peaked there at \$8 a gallon in Europe.**

**The real problem is, though, cars don't move people, cars move cars. The average car or light truck is two tons or so: 4000-plus pounds to move 200 pounds of people. OK, everybody out of the SUVs and F-150s and into a nice, green Prius. However, the curb weight of an unloaded Prius is 2765 pounds, which means a ton and a half around to get you and a bag of groceries home... Not good.**

Environmentalists like Amory Lovins of the Rocky Mountain Institute and green business advocate Paul Hawken have generated a lot of press with a proposed 100 mpg lightweight, plastic composite called the hypercar. But all the drawings of the hypercar very much resemble a car. Tires, windows, bodywork, engine and drive train. Even if everything is paper-thin - something the public won't easily

warm to -you're still driving five times body weight around.

Even if we were able to produce a 100 mpg, zero pollution vehicle, we'd still need to maintain the infrastructure of roads, bridges, and energy distribution. That means steel, concrete, asphalt and plastics. Just concrete production alone generates as much as 10 percent of all greenhouse gas. In 2007, the U.S. produced 95 million tons of cement by burning fossil fuels and, according to the EPA, is the third largest source of greenhouse gas pollution in the U.S. (Scientific America, August 7, 2008) The production of asphalt - a petroleum product - also creates carbon. As does the production of motor oil, tires, and on and on... And there's another intractable problem: the very thing that makes tires so useful - comfort, stability, adhesion - also produces immense rolling friction. In order for us to make cars that are maneuverable and relatively safe, they have to grip the road, which takes buckets of energy to overcome... **One reason trains are able to transport people using far less energy per passenger mile is that there are fewer wheels per person and steel wheels have much less rolling friction.**

**Without divine intervention - which seems to be the basis for most energy reduction schemes - there is simply no way to maintain both the atmosphere and personal transportation. Even if the population were frozen at its present level, even if economic growth stopped the sheer number of people wanting - and under the present regime, need - personal transportation makes any plan to reduce car pollution by increasing efficiency is futile. The personal automobile must be abandoned, and quickly. It would be better to do this in a measured and humane way, easing both automobile workers and users into a post-car world. It needs a societal**

consensus, requiring major shifts of goals and expectations, and few of us will take these steps on our own. But this change will eventually happen to us whether we like it or not, perhaps in time to stave off climactic disaster.

There are already attempts at designing a post-car future. City planners have been pushing the "20-minute neighborhood," where home, work, shopping and recreation are all within a 20 minute walk. Places like Portland, Oregon, are encouraging this kind of development with planning codes and tax breaks. These more compact, walkable neighborhoods would seem to point us in the right direction, but so far they're extremely limited. Most people prefer car culture. And that includes Europe, and certainly Asia, as well. Unless the various governments enact explicit and enforceable sprawl restrictions, growth will trump any specific increases in efficiencies.

The one step we ought to take right now is to withdraw our support - financial, political and emotional - from the pursuit of an energy-efficient car. We'd have better luck creating a perpetual motion machine.  
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**Plasma Converter Resource Recovery Centers™**

<http://www.startech.net/overview.html>

We maintain a strategic alliance in this segment with Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM). SOM is a world-class architectural and engineering services firm with offices throughout the world. The Company's agreement with SOM provides for their participation, on a case-by-case basis, with the architectural design and construction of Plasma Converter Resource Recovery Centers™. The use of our Plasma Converter™ configured for use in large-scale facilities represents a potential significant revenue source.

### **Sales**

Startech offers four ways that customers can purchase Plasma Converter systems and/or related engineering services as follows:

- 1. Straight Equipment Sales:** We sell our equipment to customers who prefer to purchase and operate their own equipment. We simply sell or lease our Plasma Converters and associated equipment to customers without taking an equity position in the project. The Company offers long-term service agreements to these direct customers assuring them that their systems will be serviced when needed and assuring the availability of spare parts.
- 2. Engineering Services:** Startech offers testing & application engineering services for outside companies... also material testing, waste analysis, and environmental processing solutions for Plasma Converter system customers.

The Company trains customers' system engineers and operators at its Demonstration and Training Center in Bristol, CT. A comprehensive program of classroom and hands-on training is conducted over several weeks during the customer's system build cycle, much of which is conducted on the customer's own system under assembly.

### **What is Plasma?**

Plasma is simply a gas (air) that the Converter ionizes so it becomes an effective electrical conductor and produces a lightning-like arc of electricity that is the source of the intense energy transferred to the waste material as radiant energy. The arc in the plasma plume within the vessel can be as high as 30,000 degrees Fahrenheit ... three times hotter than the surface of the Sun. When waste materials are subjected to the intensity of the energy transfer within the vessel, the excitation of the wastes' molecular bonds is so great that the waste materials' molecules break apart into their elemental components (atoms). It is the absorption of this energy by the waste material that forces the waste destruction and elemental dissociation. The Plasma Converter is computer controlled, easy to use and operates at normal atmospheric pressure, very safely and quietly

### **How Does the System Work?**

The basic Plasma Converter system consists of the following:

- In-feed System
- Plasma Vessel
- Gas Polisher
- Computer Control Station
- Power Supply

### **Feed System**

The feed mechanism can simultaneously accommodate any proportion or combination of solid, liquid and gaseous feedstock. Solid wastes, depending upon their composition, can be pumped, screw fed, or ram fed into the plasma vessel. A shredder ahead of the feed system may be appropriate to achieve size reduction or object separation prior to direct system feed.

Liquid wastes, including sludge, can be pumped directly into the PCS through the wall of the plasma vessel through a special in-feed nozzle. The liquid feed system is designed to also accommodate any entrained solids that may be present. Similarly, gaseous feedstock may also be introduced into the plasma vessel through a specially designed nozzle.

### **Plasma Vessel**

The plasma vessel is a cylindrical two-part container made of stainless steel with an opening in the roof through which the plasma torch is inserted. The vessel is lined with insulation and refractory to allow both maximum retention of internal energy and to protect the stainless steel container from the intense heat inside the vessel. The plasma vessel is equipped with inspection ports (including a video camera so the operator can see real time images inside the vessel to assist in PCS operation), openings for introduction of feedstock, and an exit port for removal of excess molten material. The smaller vessels are designed to remove molten material periodically through an automated tipping mechanism during which time the vessel may or may not remain in continuous operation. A design enhancement incorporated into the most recently constructed system is a continuous melt extraction feature which maintains the level of molten material in the plasma vessel at or below a preset limit without interrupting the operation of the system. This melt extraction system can be deployed with all sizes of Plasma Converters.

The plasma vessel is specially designed to ensure that no feedstock material is able to reach the exit port without first passing through the plasma energy field and undergoing complete molecular dissociation. The method by which this is accomplished forms a part of Startech's intellectual property. In addition, the plasma vessel is maintained at a slight negative pressure to ensure that no gases can escape to atmosphere.

The plasma torch system is a commercially available product that Startech can purchase from any number of reputable vendors. Comparable plasma systems have been used extensively in the metallurgical industry for decades. The most maintenance-intensive aspect of the PCS is the need to periodically replace electrodes, which occurs approximately every 300 to 500 hours of operation (typical). Electrode replacement can be accomplished in approximately 30 minutes thus ensuring minimum downtime of the PCS.

The PCS is also equipped with a torch positional system that allows the operator to aim the torch at different points within the plasma vessel. This aspect of the PCS allows the operator to quickly and efficiently treat feedstock as they enter the vessel and move around inside the vessel to avoid any build-up of solidified melt that may occur on the vessel walls.

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## Gas Treatment System

**The gas treatment system is comprised of six stages:**

- High temperature cyclone separator to remove particulates
- Quench stage (with heat recovery, if desired)
- Cartridge dust collector to remove particulates

- Selective catalytic reduction to remove NO<sub>x</sub>
- Packed column scrubber to remove acids and volatilized metals
- Final polishing

### High Temperature Cyclone Separator

The initial step of the gas treating process is a pre-quench in which the PCG is cooled from approximately 1000°C down to 650°C by direct water injection with a conventional spray dryer arrangement. The PCG then flows through a refractory lined pipe into a conventional, insulated cyclone fabricated with high temperature alloy and designed to operate at high temperatures. The purpose of the cyclone is to remove particulate matter, which is then collected and batch-fed back into the plasma vessel.

### Quench

PCG then flows to a spray dryer designed to rapidly reduce the gas temperature from approximately 650°C down to 120°C. The importance of this temperature reduction is to ensure that dioxins and furans, troublesome by-products of incineration, do not form. In order for dioxins and furans to form, the gas would need to remain in a specific temperature zone (e.g., 190°C to 330°C) for some period of time - conditions which are precluded by the quench.

### Cartridge Dust Collector

PCG then flows to a commercial pulsejet cartridge dust collector with high-temperature cartridges and heating elements to prevent condensation. This unit is capable of automatically "blowing back" collected solids that are collected and batch-fed back into the plasma vessel.

### Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR)

Upon exiting the dust collector, the PCG is reheated to approximately 310°C for selective catalytic reduction of NO<sub>x</sub> in a standard unit designed for this application where hydrogen present in the PCG reacts with NO<sub>x</sub> to form atmospheric nitrogen and water. During periods where there is no hydrogen in the PCG (e.g. during start-up, when processing materials that do not contain carbon), urea is added to reduce the NO<sub>x</sub>.

#### Packed Column Scrubber

Upon exiting the SCR, PCG undergoes a final quench with direct water injection to reduce the temperature below 50°C. This prepares the PCG for acid gas removal, which is accomplished in a standard horizontal packed column scrubber. Other inorganic species dissolve into the scrubbing liquid as common ions including chloride, fluoride, sulphate, phosphate, sodium and calcium. To manage the build-up of salts, the scrubbing solution is removed and replenished with fresh water. The wastewater typically requires no further treatment prior to discharge to sewer, except in the event there is a high concentration of heavy metals entering the system as feedstock. Approximately 75% of metals go into the melt with the remainder being volatilized and entrained in the PCG where they are captured in the scrubber and carbon filter (see below). The wastewater also contains particulates below one micron.

Finally, a standard variable speed fan at the exit of the gas treatment train pulls PCG through the entire system and maintains a constant, slight negative pressure within the plasma vessel.

The system has been designed so that it is comfortable, intuitive, and easy to use. The skill level of the operator need not be any higher than one having a reasonable technical aptitude.

#### **President Obama should brace for a capitalist counteroffensive - Seattle Times 06/16/09**

**You might expect the corporate guys to show a little gratitude to the government that bailed them out, writes E.J. Dionne Jr. But business lobbies now feel free to return to the old-time religion of bashing government and singing the praises of the unfettered marketplace.**

WASHINGTON — Business has been on the ropes since last fall's financial collapse, but the first glimmerings of recovery are calling forth a capitalist counteroffensive.

It's one thing for President Obama to face off against Fox News, the right-wing Radio Empire, and Republican congressional leaders whose names are unfamiliar too much of the public. It's quite another to confront organized business.

That's why last week's announcement by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce of a new "Campaign for Free Enterprise" could be one of the year's most consequential political developments. Now the real resistance to Obama begins.

As long as the global economy was crumbling, business held back and even welcomed the infusion of hundreds of billions of government dollars to prop up the system. Business leaders, like everyone else, were frightened to death. They welcomed Big Government's exertions to keep the banks alive and gin up consumer purchasing power.

It is an odd tribute to the short-term success of Obama's recovery effort that the business lobbies now feel free to return to the old-time religion of bashing government and singing the praises of the unfettered marketplace. You might expect the corporate guys to show a little gratitude to the government that bailed them out. But that's never been their way. They'd rather pretend that the last nine months were a bad dream.

Thus the Chamber's new offensive. In his statement announcing its campaign, Thomas J. Donohue, the group's president and CEO, tried to brush by the recent unpleasantness as quickly as possible.

"Dire economic circumstances have certainly justified some out-of-the-ordinary remedial actions by government," he declared. "But enough is enough. If we don't stop the rapidly growing influence of government over private sector activity, we will squander America's unmatched capacity to innovate and create a standard of living and free society that are the envy of the world."

"Enough is enough" is a hallowed slogan in American politics, and Donohue was trying to draw a bright line between yesterday's implosion and today's relative stability. The implication is that the danger has passed, that far-reaching reform is unnecessary, and that we can return to business as usual.

The Obama administration, which has largely had things its own way so far, would do well to take this declaration of war seriously. Until now, Obama has been able to occupy the broad middle ground of American politics. Many who were unhappy with how aggressive the government had to be to get the economy rolling nevertheless accepted the need for Washington to act boldly.

Even those who were committed to free enterprise in theory knew that the system had in practice broken down. When a sturdy libertarian of the stature of Judge Richard Posner offers a volume called "A Failure of Capitalism," the system's defenders know they're in trouble. That's why they're fighting back.

We have been in this place before. In her path breaking book "Invisible Hands," historian Kim Phillips-Fein traces the roots of the contemporary right to the reaction of business against FDR's New Deal. She reminds us of the

rise of the anti-Roosevelt, pro-business Liberty League, which condemned the New Deal's "ravenous madness."

The League's rhetoric is familiar, if overheated. "Businessmen are denounced officially as 'organized greed,' 'unscrupulous money changers' who 'gang up' on the liberties of the people," went one of the League's typical screeds. "The dragon teeth of class warfare are being sown with a vengeance."

We can credit Donohue for avoiding such an unsightly mixed metaphor, but there are real teeth in his implied threats to Obama's program of imposing new rules on a system that went off the rails.

Among other things, the Chamber promises "legal action to challenge unconstitutional and unlawful government regulations." Might that presage — again, the New Deal parallels are striking — a battle between a progressive president and a conservative Supreme Court?

Obama's preference is to transcend conflict, not confront it. He has been careful to present himself as a defender of free enterprise (as FDR did) and to insist that only unfortunate chance has made him the arbiter of the fate of banks and car companies.

Yet the paradox is that if the recovery continues, as Obama hopes it does, support for change will weaken, those threatened by change will be emboldened, and slogans only recently discredited will be revived. The greatest danger to Obama's plans comes not from the Republican Party, but from how short our memories are.

*E.J. Dionne's column appears regularly on editorial pages of The Times.*

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**AMA out of touch with most doctors -  
Northwest Voices – Seattle Times 06/16/09**

As a medical student at the University of Washington and a future physician, I am extremely disappointed that the American Medical Association (AMA) opposes Americans having the choice of a public health-insurance option.

As was acknowledged in your article ["AMA wary of Obama call for public health insurance," [seattletimes.com](http://seattletimes.com), Health, June 11], the AMA represents only a small fraction of doctors in the country, and by attempting to block this necessary reform, the association shows itself to be out of touch with the majority of physicians.

As a leader and member of the independent American Medical Student Association (AMSA), I support a public health-insurance option that is open to all. The private-insurance industry has shown its inability to keep health care affordable and reliably available. A recent study published in *The American Journal of Medicine* showed that having private insurance does not necessarily cover you or protect you from bankruptcy should you become sick... I fear that I will be inheriting a system where profit-driven companies stand between me and my patients. The solution begins with a real public-health insurance option so Americans have another choice. - *Colin McCluney, University of Washington AMSA chapter president, Seattle*

**The Daily Left** - [GoLeft TV](http://GoLeftTV.com) posted on June 12, 2009

200 Million Refugees Expected to Accompany Climate Change.

This week, according to new studies, as many as 200 million people could become environmental refugees if current climate models hold true. Estimates of the likely numbers range from 25 to 50 million people by 2010, while the International Organization for

Migration has pitched a figure of 200 million by 2050. While not using the word "refugee," because it has a specific political context, the reality is that global warming will produce tens of millions of refugees. All major estimates project that the trend will rise to tens of millions of migrants in coming years. Within the next few decades, the consequences of climate change for human security efforts could be devastating. In fact, we've already begun to see refugees fleeing from areas that have been effected by climate change. Rather than a migration from poor countries to rich ones, the exodus is most likely to unfold within poor nations, with a movement mainly from the countryside to cities, thus further burdening urban infrastructure. Scientists predict that some of these changes are already irreversible, while others can be prevented if global action is taken quickly.

### **Corporate Profits Muscle Out The Public Option -**

<http://www.alternet.org/story/140738/> By **Robert L. Borosage, Campaign for America's Future - June 17, 2009**

We're headed into the end game for health care reform. The president has put himself in the arena. The insurance lobby is unleashing the scare campaign. A strong bill will pass the House. But at this point, too many senators are still standing in the way...The reform includes a broad range of measures to extend and improve care and help curb rising costs, but the epicenter of the debate is over what is called the "public option." Health care reform will mandate businesses provide insurance or pay into a general fund. Individuals will be responsible to get health insurance, with subsidies for those who can't afford it. We'll be able to retain the insurance we have, or have the choice of a range of plans, including a public option, modeled after Medicare. A strong public option, competing with private

insurance, is key to helping to get costs under control.

And costs must be brought under control. We now spend nearly 50 percent more on health care per capita than any other country, with mediocre results. We ration care by price, with some 47 million Americans uninsured. It costs the rest of us about \$1,000 a year to pay for the price of their care when they are forced finally to check themselves into emergency rooms...As the auto companies showed, businesses increasingly can't afford health care. Families find it unaffordable. Virtually the entire long-term debt challenge facing the U.S. government is from the projected rise of health care costs. Get health care costs under control, the U.S. has no long term fiscal problem. Fail to get them under control, the costs will bankrupt the federal government, state governments, businesses that offer health care (and increasing numbers won't) and families. Reform that gets costs under control is imperative. There is no choice.

A key to getting costs under control is the public plan. It can take advantage of its purchasing power to gain cost reductions. It can model best care practices. Private insurance—which in most localities translates into [a couple of dominant providers that don't compete on price](#)—will be forced to measure up with greater efficiency, innovation, and cost savings techniques.

Yet the debate in the Senate has been fixated on how to weaken or abandon the public plan rather than strengthen it. Republicans, for the most part, have taken themselves out of the adult conversation. Like first generation robots, they endlessly repeat the exact same words [crafted by Frank Luntz](#): "government takeover," "no choice of doctor," "bureaucrats, not doctors, prescribing medicine." It's frankly pathetic. We have no choice as a society but to figure out how to fix this—and Republican leaders have chosen simply to peddle lies and

scare stories and absent themselves from any serious discussion.

A gaggle of Democratic Senators—led by Sen. Max Baucus and the so-called "moderates"—have publicly thrashed around for ways to weaken or gut the public option. Outside groups like the [Third Way](#) have provided guidelines for disemboweling it. Some have suggested putting it off until private insurance competition proves it can't get costs under control—as if that hasn't been proven over the last decades. Others, remarkably, have detailed ways to deprive the public option of the power to lower costs. They call for a "level playing field" with private insurance. The public plan can't be subsidized, can't use its buying power to lower costs, can't take advantage of lower administrative overhead... This sounds silly. We face soaring health care costs that will literally cripple our future. Surely, no senator concerned about the country would work to undermine the key idea that would help get a lid on costs. They wouldn't, as Barack Obama [warned](#), just "create a system where the insurance companies have more customers on Uncle Sam's dime, but still fail to meet their responsibilities." If you assume that, you would be wrong. They've done it repeatedly in the past.

For example, early in President Bush's first term, Republicans decided that passing a prescription drug benefit for seniors would help cement Karl Rove's permanent majority. The benefit would help 41 million Americans with a soaring cost of care not yet covered by Medicare. It would also create a massive new market for the drug companies. And, of course, Medicare could do what governments across the world do—use its buying power to lower the cost of the drugs... Only, when Republicans passed the law—in the dead of night, twisting arms to get it done—it actually prohibited Medicare from negotiating a lower price for drugs. Don't worry, they argued,

competition would lower drug costs (even as they banned the import of cheaper drugs from Canada or Mexico).

Why? Well, using government muscle violated "free-market" sensibilities. More importantly, the drug companies have one of the most [powerful lobbies](#) on Capitol Hill. Rep. Billy Tauzin, the chair of the key House committee ushering the bill through, left soon after to get a \$2 million-a-year job as a head of PhRMA, the drug company lobby. Tom Scully, the Bush administration's point person who helped keep the actual cost of the bill secret, was already negotiating his million-dollar job as the debate was going on. In all, 15 congressional representatives, aides and administration officials involved in the debate left shortly thereafter to take jobs with the drug lobby. With a \$9 billion increase in annual profits at stake, the drug industry got an amazing return on its investment...Today, seniors pay 60 percent more for the same drugs than the price charged veterans because the Veteran's Administration does negotiate lower prices.

Money talks. Nine Republican Senators on the key Senate Finance Committee wrote President Obama to say they would oppose any reform with a public plan. The [Center for Responsive Politics](#) reports that the nine had pocketed \$17.7 million in contributions from insurance and health care interests over the course of their careers...Not surprisingly, the 20 largest insurance and drug companies and their trade associations have [pumped up](#) their lobbying by 41 percent over last year—with reported spending over \$75 million in the first quarter alone.... This is the corruption of crony capitalism; a compromised congress using taxpayer's money to enrich entrenched interests. Only now, the cost of this in health care is not sustainable. Dramatic reform is vital or we all follow the auto companies and go belly up. *Robert Borosage is co-director of the Campaign For America's Future*

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ken-dychtwald/the-biggest-problem-with\\_b\\_216446.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ken-dychtwald/the-biggest-problem-with_b_216446.html)

## **The Biggest Problem With U.S. Health Care -- And How To Fix It!**

**Ken Dychtwald Ph.D.** - Renowned Psychologist, Gerontologist and Author

While most of the current healthcare debate has focused on how to cover the tens of millions of uninsured Americans and who should pay (granted, these are critically important issues), after thirty-five years working at the intersection of gerontology and healthcare, I'm convinced that we have the WRONG healthcare system for our aging nation. If your train is headed in the wrong direction, it doesn't help to give everyone a seat. And, since the U.S. currently spends nearly twice as much per capita on healthcare as all the other modernized nations, while our national life expectancy ranks a humiliating 42nd worldwide, it's not that we throw too little money at the problem, but that we may not be spending it in the wisest ways.

## **The Age Wave is Coming**

Until recently, most people died relatively young of infectious diseases, accidents, or in childbirth. When the first US census was taken in 1790, half the population was under the age of 16 and less than 2 percent of the 4 million Americans were 65 and older. As a result, society rarely concerned itself about the needs of its aging citizens. The elderly were too few to matter.

However, during the past century, advances in medical diagnostics, pharmaceuticals, surgical techniques, and nutrition have eliminated many of the problems that once caused most people to die young. And so, the irony is that our medical successes have produced tens of millions of long-lived men and women who now struggle for decades with debilitating

chronic illnesses such as heart disease, cancer, arthritis, osteoporosis, COPD and Alzheimer's - that our system is absolutely NOT prepared to handle -- causing immeasurable suffering and trillions of misspent tax dollars.

With the average life expectancy having vaulted to 78 (and rising), the 13% of our population over 65 now accounts for: 44% of hospital care, 38% of all emergency medical services responses, 35% of all prescriptions, 26% of all physician office visits and 90% of all nursing home use. And, the first of the 78 million boomers will become eligible for Medicare in only 18 months!

### **The Four-Part Solution**

#### **#1: Multiply the amount of scientific research needed to delay or eliminate the diseases of aging.**

In May 1961, President John F. Kennedy looked to the sky and stated, "I believe this nation should commit itself, before this decade is out, to landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth." In response, we mobilized all of our science and energy to realize that dream a short eight years later... Similarly, in order to avert the costly chronic disease pandemics looming in our future, we must bring about a commitment of sufficient intelligence, creativity and resources to replace *unhealthy aging* with *healthy aging*... The dollars that have been committed to the life sciences to battle the diseases of aging, however, are woefully inadequate to get the job done. For each tax dollar we currently spend on treating disease, only about one cent goes to fund the scientific research that could delay or prevent some of these dread pandemics in the first place. For example, it is estimated that if we could postpone the onset of Alzheimer's disease by five years, half of all the nursing-home beds in America would empty.

#### **#2: Make disease prevention and self-care a national priority.**

Let's be honest....we've become a nation of gluttons. We eat too much, exercise too little and then get angry at the healthcare system when we're sick. This lack of proper prevention, self-care and disease management winds up being a key factor in many of our eventual struggles with illness. This is even true among the elderly. For example, 9% of the 65+ population remain chronic smokers, a third don't exercise regularly, 40% are overweight and 23% are considered obese... According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 50 percent of our potential for lifelong health is determined by our personal behaviors. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle can reduce heart disease, hypertension, non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, colon cancer, and osteoporotic fractures -- most of the most common diseases of aging... Our healthcare system should be focused on helping and motivating us all to compress the various diseases of old age into the shortest possible time at the very end of life - and thereby raise the odds of living long and well (which would please both Mr. Spock and Dr. Spock). (I wonder why Michael Moore neglected to mention self-care in his otherwise provocative documentary *Sicko*? Was it because it's far easier to "blame the system" than it is to take responsibility for one's own role in the problem?)

#### **#3: Replace medical incompetence with aging-ready healthcare professionals.**

When the leading edge of the baby boom arrived in the mid-1940's, America and its institutions were totally unprepared. Waiting lists and long lines developed at hospitals across the country, apartments and homes didn't have enough bedrooms for boomer kids and there was a shortage of baby food and diapers... With the coming age wave, we should be preparing armies of "aging-ready"

healthcare professionals. We aren't. Less than one percent of all the physicians in America have been trained and certified as geriatricians. However well-intentioned they may be, most primary-care physicians have received little or no continuing education in geriatrics. The same holds true in nursing, allied health, and pharmacology.

Every medical school in the United Kingdom has a department of geriatrics. But with 130

A century ago, 75 to 80 percent of all deaths took place at home with family and friends on hand. Roughly the same percentage of all deaths now occur in institutions -- hospitals, extended care facilities, and nursing homes... In fact, Medicare spends approximately 28 percent of its total budget on patients in their last year of life -- sometimes when the attempt to prolong life merely means an expensive, inhumane, high-tech death. And something that no one seems willing to talk about is the fact that the extension of dying in this fashion all too often becomes a capitalist feast as some medical companies see their profits grow, the longer the dying process is extended.

We'd be wise to shift the emphasis for the dying patient to "palliative care" or hospice care -- which focuses on the relief of symptoms, controlling pain, and the provision of emotional and spiritual support for the patient and their family. Such treatment requires relatively little apparatus and technology, is much less costly than the procedures currently in place in most hospitals and provides for a far more humane and dignified last stage of life.

### **The Challenge Ahead**

On January 1, 2011, the first baby boomer will turn 65. Whether we grow old sick, frail, and dependent -- or vital, active, and productive -- will depend on our ability to dramatically alter the orientation, strategies, skills, and financial incentives of our current healthcare system. And so, while we're focusing now on the coverage and financing of our damaged healthcare system, we should also focus on re-visioning healthcare's purpose -- to create **long-lived, productive and healthy men and women**. *The founding CEO of Age Wave, he lives with his wife and children in the San Francisco Bay Area.*

### **ENERGY** - By John C. Darvill – Authorized Technocracy Speaker

Energy is the key factor in the conversion of resources into use form, this then becomes a true measure of everything that is produced and consumed. Using energy as a means of distribution would enable a very accurate record to be kept of everything produced, and distributed, and to what extent it was being consumed, producing more or less as required, without waste. At the present time only North America is in a position to introduce such a system of social operations, only here has sufficient research been undertaken to make such a claim. However, the method of science, the methodology of predicting the most probable, is universally applicable, and can be applied to any land area of a contiguous nature, to improve the standard of life. If this method of social operation was installed in North America, an example would be set for the rest of the world to follow and emulate. All assistance to improve the living standards of other areas would be offered; NO STRINGS

medical schools, there are, amazingly, only thirteen such departments in the entire United States. Because of limited geriatric competency, every week our physicians make millions of costly mistakes: misdiagnoses, inappropriate surgeries and punishing complications due to faulty medication management (polypharmacy).

### **#4: Palliative care: death with dignity.**

ATTACHED, giving our expertise, and trained personnel to assist and guide only, to be used as the people of the area saw fit.

Contrast this with the money grabbing lust for power which motivates all actions taken today. Realize that this is why there is so much distrust and hatred in the world at present. We had soon better realize that there is only one world, we exist or perish on this planet, and we have to do something to save it for future generations, while there is still something left to save.

It is long past time that the human race outgrew tribal warfare and learned cooperation and assistance. Aggression will only lead to more aggression until there is nothing left but a ravaged planet; with the unfortunate survivors scratching around for survival.

There is a far better way of administering our social affairs. Functional government, with a distribution system based on Energy Determinants would solve most of today's major problems. A mechanism would be put into place to analyze and seek solutions to the social ills now confronting us. Solutions would be found that were practical and would not accrue to the benefit of any individual or group. North America has the means and know-how to put such a system in place. All that is required is the will. North America can and MUST show the way.