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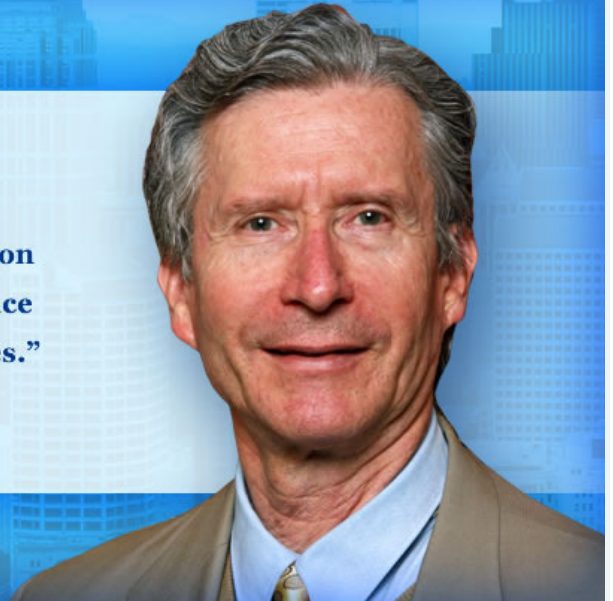
**Nourishing
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**An Affordable
Solution to
Healthcare**

ISSUE 18

“If health insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid started covering the Transcendental Meditation technique it would be possible to greatly reduce skyrocketing national healthcare expenditures.”

—Robert Herron, Ph.D.



An Affordable Solution to Healthcare

Interview with Robert E. Herron, Ph.D.

BY LINDA EGENES

America has the most expensive healthcare system in the world. Researchers cite the increase in chronic disease as a major cause of escalating costs and predict a 42 percent rise in chronic disease by 2023, adding \$4.2 trillion in treatment costs. The good news is that chronic disease is preventable, since many chronic conditions are linked to stress and unhealthy lifestyles.

Robert E. Herron, Ph.D., is an independent researcher, writer, speaker, and consultant in medical cost reduction and economic policy, and he is currently the director of the Center for Holistic Systems Analysis in Fairfield, Iowa. Dr. Herron's new book, *New Knowledge For New Results*, presents a comprehensive strategy to reduce rising medical costs. While other researchers focus mainly on financial issues, Dr. Herron re-examines the underlying foundations of modern medicine.

Here Dr. Herron talks about our current healthcare crisis and how the Transcendental Meditation technique can help prevent chronic disease and lower costs.

Linda Egenes: As a nation, how can preventive measures help us to lower healthcare costs?

Dr. Robert Herron: To say it in one sentence, by providing preventive treatment modalities to the people who consistently incur the greatest expenses, we could leverage the greatest reductions in overall medical expenses and end up with the lowest treatment cost for everyone.

In most populations, a small fraction of people account for the majority of healthcare costs. In the U.S., for instance, the 10 percent of the population with the highest expenses incurred 60-70 percent of our total medical expenditures annually. In the Medicare population, the highest spending 5 percent incurred 43 percent of total Medicare costs, and 25 percent of seniors accounted for 85 percent of total expenses.

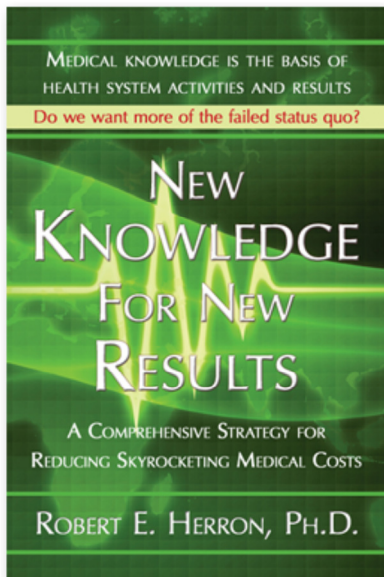
Research shows that high-cost people typically have chronic conditions, which are affected by excessive stress. As we know, stress degrades the immune system and other physiological systems, such as the



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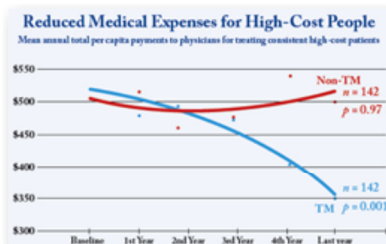
Live The Process, an online collaborative guide to wellness and



“When you meditate, your body experiences a unique state of physical and mental rest that eliminates stress and helps to balance and normalize all your bodily systems. This improves health and reduces costs.”

—Dr. Robert Herron

heart. That is why the research shows that when we improve health with the TM technique, there are corresponding declines in all disease categories and medical costs.



Research by Dr. Robert Herron, published in the *American Journal of Health Promotion* 2011; 26(1): 56–60, found a 28 percent reduction in doctors’ bills over five years from baseline for persistent high-cost people who practiced the TM technique.

hoped that someday the best interventions might be able to, at best, *slow down the rate of increase* in

cardiovascular system and contributes to a wide range of physical and mental disorders.

Prolonged stress also contributes to the unhealthy lifestyles that cause most chronic conditions—such as smoking, drinking, and abuse of drugs—which account for approximately 80 percent of national medical expenditures. Clearly, stress reduction will help reduce high medical costs.

Because chronic stress is a leading driver of high medical expenses, if health insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid started covering the Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique, the most effective stress-reduction method as shown by research, it would be possible to greatly reduce skyrocketing national healthcare expenditures without cutting benefits, increasing premiums, or raising taxes.

Linda Egenes: How does the Transcendental Meditation technique reduce stress?

Dr. Robert Herron: When you meditate, your body experiences a unique state of physical and mental rest that eliminates stress and helps to balance and normalize all your bodily systems. The TM technique also makes the mind and body more resilient so you don’t accumulate excessive stress in the future. This improves health and reduces costs.

In addition to stress release, however, there are other beneficial activities that occur during the TM technique. For instance, during TM sessions many researchers have found that brain functioning is enhanced, resulting in greater brain orderliness and coherence, which also increases intelligence and creativity.

Disease is a state of disorder or imbalance in both mind and body. Because the brain controls most systems in our physiology, if we make the brain more orderly, then the entire body also becomes more orderly and healthy, including the

Linda Egenes: I understand that you’ve published a number of research studies on healthcare costs. Can you talk about your research?

Dr. Robert Herron: The most recent study was published in the *American Journal of Health Promotion* in 2011. The results indicated that people with consistently high doctors’ bills experienced a 28 percent cumulative decrease in physician fees after an average of five years of TM practice. Even after the first year of meditation, the TM group’s physicians’ bills declined by 11 percent.

What did these findings mean? First of all, the research demonstrated that the largest and quickest reductions in medical costs could be achieved by providing the TM program to people with consistently high healthcare costs—the very people who are driving up the costs of healthcare today.

Secondly, it showed that a nonmedical intervention, the Transcendental Meditation technique, resulted in a *statistically significant decline* in healthcare usage that persisted for five years. In other words, with the group that practiced TM, the number of times they visited the doctor was less at the end of the five-year study than it had been at the start of the study.

This kind of decline in healthcare usage had never been shown before. Prior to this research, health economists and leaders

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medical expenses.

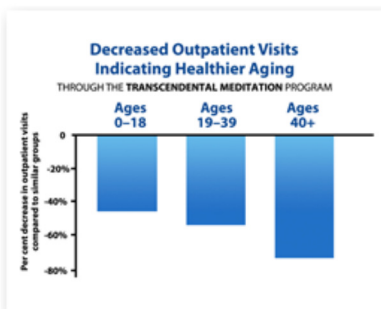
Thus leaders in the field of healthcare had never even imagined that a decline in healthcare usage would be possible for this group of chronically ill patients. Yet because the TM technique has such a powerful health-enhancing effect, the impossible has become the common experience of people who meditate regularly.

Linda Egenes: That's an extraordinary finding. Are there any other studies that indicate the Transcendental Meditation technique can create a decrease in healthcare utilization over a long period of time?

Dr. Robert Herron: Yes, several other studies also suggest this. For instance, a study by Dr. David Orme-Johnson, published in *Psychosomatic Medicine* in 1987, examined five years of health insurance data to assess the medical usage of 2,000 TM practitioners compared with controls. When compared with norms (everyone else in the health insurance plan of the same age and gender) and other groups of similar profession, the TM subjects had 50 percent lower inpatient and outpatient medical visits. This trend held across all age groups and disease categories. According to the clinically significant findings, there was 87 percent less hospitalization than norms for heart disease, and 55 percent less hospitalization than norms for cancer.

This study and others demonstrating reduced healthcare utilization through the TM technique were published in peer-reviewed journals, and over 242 additional studies have been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals showing that the TM technique improves a wide range of mental and physical health disorders. Many of these studies were randomized clinical trials and meta-analyses.

Several randomized clinical trials funded by the National Institutes of Health found that the TM technique decreases high blood pressure, improves heart function, reduces cardiovascular mortality, and decreases all-cause death rates.



Research by Dr. David Orme-Johnson, published in *Psychosomatic Medicine* 1987; 49: 493-507, found a 50 percent reduction in patient and outpatient medical visits in the group practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique as compared to controls.

The body of research is strong. To me, it implies that we should make policy changes at all levels of the healthcare system to make this life-saving methodology of the TM technique available to everyone. Then we could begin to halt the epidemic of stress-related diseases that are causing unnecessary suffering and driving healthcare costs higher.

Linda Egenes: I understand that the TM technique has also been shown to be a cost-effective way to treat mental disorders such as chronic anxiety and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Dr. Robert Herron: Yes. Three research studies that evaluated the impact of TM practice on veterans who suffer from PTSD found dramatic declines in negative tendencies, as well as increases in happiness, harmony, positive attitudes, and wholesome, productive lifestyles. The numerous testimonials from these veterans indicate that the TM technique completely changed their lives and, in many cases, saved them from suicide. These early studies are now being repeated in other settings with many more veterans by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense.

Linda Egenes: Based on your research and knowledge of the healthcare system, what would it take to get a preventive program such as the Transcendental Meditation technique widely adopted?

Dr. Robert Herron: For a preventive program such as the TM technique to become widely adopted, the federal and state governments and health insurance organizations simply need to examine the entire body of TM research that verifies its health benefits. Then, in the best interests of their constituents and


consumers, they could provide full insurance coverage for starting the TM technique as soon as possible. Governments would save large amounts of money and would be able to balance their budgets more easily.

So the solution is simple: just add a TM benefit. If the TM technique were made available to the entire population, it could become a powerful means to prevent disease and enhance happiness and progress in all areas of life.

Linda Egenes is co-editor of Enlightenment: The Transcendental Meditation® Magazine. She is the author of five books, including Super Healthy Kids: A Parent's Guide to Maharishi Ayurveda, co-authored with Kumuda

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