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Take Control of Your Health

Big Pharma Is Fooling You Again, and You Don't Even Know It

Analysis by Dr. Joseph Mercola | July 13, 2024

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- America faces a severe health crisis, with 80% of adults overweight or obese and over 50% pre-diabetic. This epidemic of metabolic dysfunction has occurred in just one generation
- Mitochondrial dysfunction plays a crucial role in chronic diseases. When these cellular powerhouses falter, it triggers a cascade of health problems throughout the body
- The pharmaceutical industry heavily influences medical education, research, and media coverage. Conflicts of interest are rampant, with drug companies funding studies and paying doctors directly
- Current healthcare systems profit from keeping people sick. Treating symptoms separately with multiple medications, rather than addressing root causes, perpetuates chronic conditions and dependency on drugs
- Solutions involve addressing root causes of metabolic dysfunction through lifestyle changes, reforming agricultural subsidies, stricter conflict of interest rules, and reshaping medical education to emphasize nutrition and preventive care

A survey[1] recently conducted by KFF (Kaiser Family Foundation), a reputable health policy research organization, found that approximately 12% (or 1 in 8) of U.S. adults have used a GLP-1 drug like Ozempic, Wegovy, or similar medications at some point in their lives.

- About 6% of adults (more than 15 million individuals) are currently prescribed these medications.
- Most adults (61%) who have used these drugs did so to manage chronic conditions like diabetes or heart disease.
- 38% of users reported taking these drugs specifically for weight loss.
- Usage varies by age group, with adults aged 50-64 being the most likely to have tried these medications.

These startling statistics are expanded upon in this interview with Tucker Carlson and Calley Means, the brother of Stanford trained physician **Casey Means whom I recently interviewed**. Prepare yourself for a journey that will challenge everything you thought you knew about America's health crisis.

The conversation opens with a stark reality check: the United States is facing an unprecedented decline in health, with implications that reach far beyond individual well-being to threaten the very fabric of society.

The interview paints a grim picture of the current state of American health. A staggering 42.4% of American adults are now obese and another 30.7% are overweight.[2] That means 73.1% of adults are either overweight or obese. But this isn't just about carrying a few extra pounds — it's a visible symptom of a much deeper, more insidious problem plaguing your nation: widespread metabolic dysfunction.

As you delve deeper into the conversation, you'll discover that this epidemic of poor health has happened with alarming speed. In just one generation, the percentage of overweight or obese Americans has skyrocketed.

Even more shocking, approximately 48% of American adults now have pre-diabetes (estimated 52% of men and 44% of women) when using a fasting blood sugar of 100 mg/dL or higher as the threshold.[3] This more stringent criterion provides a more accurate picture of the metabolic health crisis facing the nation.

The crisis isn't limited to adults either; an estimated 24% of adolescents aged 12 to 18 are pre-diabetic.[4] Thirty percent of American adults[5] and 18.5% of adolescents and young adults[6] (ages 12 to 24) also have fatty liver disease, a condition once seen only in elderly alcoholics.

The economic impact of this health crisis is staggering. Healthcare costs are spiraling out of control, with billions spent annually on treating preventable conditions. On an individual level, the cost of managing chronic health conditions can run into thousands of dollars per year. And these costs have only increased with the introduction of newer medications.

How Dysfunctional Powerhouses Drive America's Health Epidemic

But here's where things get interesting and concerning. A key player in this health drama that you might not have considered before, your mitochondria. These tiny powerhouses within your cells are responsible for producing adenosine 5'-triphosphate (ATP), the energy currency that powers almost all cellular processes. When these mitochondria malfunction, it sets off a cascade of problems throughout your body.

Chronic health conditions put enormous stress on your cells. Initially, your mitochondria try to keep up by increasing ATP production. But over time, this production starts to falter, signaling mitochondrial dysfunction. The consequences of this energy deficit are far-reaching. With less ATP available, all energy-dependent processes in your cells begin to suffer.

The delicate balance of ions inside and outside your cells is disrupted, enzymatic reactions slow down, and your body's basic functions are compromised.

Your cells, desperate for energy, begin to rely more heavily on glycolysis, a less efficient form of energy production that occurs in the cell's cytoplasm rather than in the mitochondria. This shift towards glycolysis and increased lactate production is

reminiscent of the Warburg effect seen in rapidly growing tumors. It's a sign that your cells are under severe metabolic stress.

As if this weren't concerning enough, dysfunctional mitochondria become a major source of reactive oxygen species (ROS). These highly reactive molecules wreak havoc in your cells, oxidizing critical proteins and damaging cellular structures. This oxidative stress has wide-ranging effects, altering gene transcription, damaging DNA, and triggering local inflammation.

But the damage doesn't stop at the cellular level. Mitochondrial dysfunction triggers the release of inflammatory cytokines, activates fibroblasts, and promotes tissue remodeling throughout your body. This structural remodeling further enhances the likelihood of chronic diseases developing and persisting.

You might be wondering how this ties into the broader health crisis facing America. The interview draws clear connections between mitochondrial dysfunction and a host of health issues plaguing the nation, from obesity and diabetes to heart disease and even mental health disorders by pointing fingers at the systems and institutions that have allowed this health crisis to develop.

The corruption in the food industry and government agencies has heavily contributed to this problem. For instance, did you know that more money from agriculture subsidies in America today goes to cigarettes than to vegetables? Or that 90% of subsidies go to highly processed food?

The U.S. government, through the food stamp program, is essentially paying people to drink soda. More than $10 billion per year go from the federal treasury to soda companies through this program. Even more shockingly, you'll learn that until recently, civil rights groups were paid to argue that removing soda from food stamp eligibility was racist.

How Drug Companies Exploit Obesity and Fuel America's Health Crisis

But perhaps the most disturbing revelation is about the pharmaceutical industry's role in this health crisis. Drug companies are profiting from the very conditions they claim to treat. The push for drugs like Ozempic, which is being touted as a miracle cure for obesity is a classic example as it is being promoted for obesity but rather than cure obesity it forces you to manage it for life, at a cost of $20,000 per patient per year.

The math is staggering. With 73.1% of American adults overweight or obese, the potential market for this drug is enormous. Wall Street is already anticipating massive profits, with food stocks going down and pharma stocks going up. The interview suggests that this drug is on track to become the most successful in American history, potentially funneling trillions of dollars from government funding into pharmaceutical companies.

But it's not just about the money. There are very serious and dangerous side effects of drugs like Ozempic, including gastrointestinal issues, stomach paralysis, and even increased risk of depression and suicide, and 30% of people stop taking the drug within three months, even when it's fully paid for by insurance.

This is a deeply entrenched problem in the American healthcare system. There are massive conflicts of interest that permeate medical research, with pharmaceutical companies funding the very studies that are supposed to evaluate their products. The interview reveals that the largest spender on TV news ads is the pharmaceutical industry, and that drug companies are among the largest funders of foundational obesity research.

Even more disturbing, drug makers spend hundreds of millions of dollars a year in direct cash payments to doctors. These "consulting fees" create a clear conflict of interest, as these same doctors are the ones prescribing the medications.

The GLP-1 Paradox

Ozempic does indeed provide a hormone that your body desperately needs, GLP-1 is a hormone that is primarily produced by specialized cells in your colon called

enteroendocrine L cells. These cells are scattered throughout your intestines, but they're most concentrated in your colon.

But unlike Ozempic that gives you continuous GLP-1, these L cells produce GLP-1[7] in response to the nutrients you eat, especially carbohydrates and fats. GLP-1 plays a crucial role in regulating your blood sugar. It stimulates insulin secretion, inhibits glucagon release, and slows down how quickly your stomach empties.[8,9]

The effects of these gut hormones on your appetite and food intake are profound. GLP-1, whether naturally released or administered as a medication, has been consistently shown to reduce food intake in both animals and humans.

This is why GLP-1 receptor agonists are now used as treatments for obesity and Type 2 diabetes. The effects of GIP on appetite are less clear and somewhat controversial, with some studies suggesting it might increase food intake. However, recent research has shown promise in combining GLP-1 and GIP agonists for even greater weight loss and metabolic benefits.[10]

The mechanisms by which these hormones influence your eating behavior are complex. They involve both direct effects on your digestive system — slowing down stomach emptying and intestinal movement — and interactions with your nervous system. GLP-1, for example, can activate nerve endings in your intestine that send signals to your brain, influencing areas involved in appetite control and food reward.

It can also act directly on your brain after crossing the blood-brain barrier. This intricate system of nutrient sensing and hormone release in your gut plays a crucial role in regulating your appetite, metabolism, and overall health, underscoring the truth in the old saying that you are what you eat.

Ozempic is mimicking a natural process in your body, but at what cost? They're not addressing the root cause of why your L cells might not be producing enough GLP-1 in the first place. Instead, they're creating a dependency on an external source of this hormone.

And let's not forget the price tag — $20,000 per year for something your body should be producing naturally if given the right conditions. It's another example of how the pharmaceutical industry is profiting from our metabolic dysfunction rather than helping us address the underlying issues.

What you should be asking is: why aren't your L cells functioning properly? What in your diet and lifestyle is disrupting this natural process? But of course, there's no profit in teaching you how to eat and live in a way that supports your natural GLP-1 production. It's much more lucrative to sell you a synthetic version for the rest of your life.

This is just another piece of the puzzle in understanding how deeply flawed our approach to health has become. We're not treating the cause; we're managing symptoms at an exorbitant cost, both financially and in terms of our long-term health.

How Drug Companies Shape Medical Education, News and Public Policy

Then there is the pharmaceutical industry's influence on medical education and practice. Most of the continuing medical education is funded by drug companies, creating a bias in the information doctors receive. Calley Means reveals that when he worked in the pharmaceutical industry, it was an open secret that the primary purpose of drug ads on TV wasn't to convince consumers to ask for specific medications, but to subvert the news business itself.

This revelation might leave you reeling. The idea that pharmaceutical companies are buying airtime not just to advertise their products, but to influence the very content of the news you watch, is deeply disturbing. It explains why you rarely see investigative reporting on issues related to drug safety or effectiveness.

But the influence doesn't stop there. Pharmaceutical companies have infiltrated medical research at every level. The National Institutes of Health (NIH), which you might have thought was an independent government agency, is deeply entangled with the

pharmaceutical industry. Most NIH grants go to research that has conflicts of interest with pharmaceutical drugs.

This system of conflicted research extends to universities as well. Food industry spending on foundational nutrition research is 11 times greater than that of the NIH. This means that much of what you think you know about nutrition is likely influenced by companies that profit from selling processed foods.

Then there is the revolving door between government regulatory agencies and the industries they're supposed to oversee. You'll learn how officials from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other agencies often leave their government positions to take high-paying jobs in the pharmaceutical industry, and vice versa. This creates a system where regulators are incentivized to make decisions that benefit their future employers rather than public health.

There is also a connection between the pharmaceutical industry's influence on civil rights organizations. Some of the largest civil rights groups in the country, including the NAACP, have received funding from pharmaceutical companies and have subsequently lobbied for policies that benefit these companies. For example, the NAACP has argued that not supporting government funding for obesity drugs like Ozempic is a form of systemic racism.

This revelation might leave you feeling betrayed. The idea that organizations you've trusted to fight for social justice are being used as mouthpieces for pharmaceutical companies is deeply unsettling. It's a stark reminder of how pervasive the influence of these companies has become.

Then the conversation shifts to the state of mental health in America, and the picture it paints is grim; 17.7% of women in the United States are on selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs),[11] medications used to treat depression and anxiety. Even more alarmingly, SSRI prescription rates are skyrocketing among teens, with many high schools treating these powerful drugs as a first-line defense against mental health issues.

How America's Healthcare System Profits From Illness and Overmedication

But the problems don't stop there, about 20% of high school seniors are on drugs like Adderall,[12] which he describes as "essentially methamphetamines." You'll learn that these drugs were originally developed by Nazi Germany as a tool to make soldiers more aggressive, and now they're being widely prescribed to American children.

Then we have the number one cause of death, heart disease and the widespread use of statin drugs. Nearly 50% of American men over 40 are on statins, medications designed to lower cholesterol. This approach is fundamentally flawed. Heart disease isn't a statin deficiency, and prescribing these drugs creates a moral hazard by giving people the false impression that they can eat whatever they want if they take their medication.

Next up is diabetes or metabolic dysfunction, which is the root cause of many other health problems. You'll learn that almost 100% of people with Alzheimer's have pre-diabetes or diabetes, leading some researchers to call Alzheimer's "Type 3 diabetes." The cost of managing diabetes in the United States is staggering — more than the entire defense budget.

But perhaps the most chilling revelation is yet to come. The current healthcare system is designed to profit from keeping people sick. Hospitals, doctors, pharmaceutical companies, and insurance providers all make more money when people are sick for longer periods of time. This perverse incentive structure, he argues, is at the heart of America's health crisis.

To illustrate this point, Calley shares a personal story about his mother. At age 71, she was told by her doctor that she was healthy, despite being on seven lifetime medications. These included statins for high cholesterol, metformin for high blood sugar, and medications for high blood pressure.

He argues that this approach of treating each symptom as a separate condition, rather than addressing the underlying metabolic dysfunction, is fundamentally flawed and serves only to keep people dependent on medications.

Calley argues for a radical rethinking of how we approach health in America. He suggests that instead of relying on medications to manage symptoms, we should focus on addressing the root causes of metabolic dysfunction.

This approach, he believes could dramatically improve health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs. He points out that many chronic conditions, including obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, can be reversed through lifestyle changes, particularly improvements in diet and exercise.

Tackling Systemic Issues and Empowering Change

However, implementing these changes on a societal level would require overcoming significant obstacles. Calley outlines several policy changes that could make a difference:

1. Banning pharmaceutical advertising on television news. This would reduce the industry's influence over media coverage of health issues.
2. Changing food stamp policies to restrict the purchase of sugary drinks and processed foods. This could help reduce the government's indirect subsidization of unhealthy eating habits.
3. Redirecting agricultural subsidies away from processed foods and towards healthier options like vegetables and fruits.
4. Implementing stricter conflict of interest rules for medical researchers and doctors. This could help ensure that medical advice and research are not unduly influenced by pharmaceutical company interests.
5. Reforming medical education to place a greater emphasis on nutrition and lifestyle interventions rather than just pharmacological treatments.

But there is a solution if you think critically about the health advice you receive and the systems that produce it. Calley urges you to consider your own health from a broader perspective, understanding that many of the chronic conditions plaguing modern society are interconnected and often stem from the same root causes.

He acknowledges that these changes would face significant opposition from powerful industries. However, he argues that the stakes are too high to maintain the status quo. The current trajectory of American health, he warns, is unsustainable and threatens not just individual well-being but the economic and social fabric of the nation.

While the systems influencing health in America are complex and often opaque, individual choices still matter. The interview has armed you with knowledge about the true state of health in America and the forces shaping it. Now, it's up to you to use this information to make more informed decisions about your own health and to advocate for broader societal changes.

My New Book Cellular Health, Has the Answers for You

In the face of the alarming revelations about mitochondrial dysfunction and its far-reaching effects on your health, it's clear that a new approach is needed. This is where my new book, “Cellular Health: The Unified Theory of Health for Ultimate Longevity and Joy” becomes your perfect antidote. This comprehensive guide will provide you with all the specific steps you need to climb out of this metabolic mess and reclaim your health and vitality.

I am excited that you will soon be able to read through “Cellular Health” and be able to dive deep into the core issues of mitochondrial dysfunction. My book explains in accessible terms how these cellular powerhouses work and what happens when they fail. You’ll gain a clear understanding of the role mitochondria play in energy production and how their impairment sets off a chain reaction of health problems.

One of the key elements of the book is its detailed nutritional strategies designed to support mitochondrial health. You will learn about the foods and supplements that can enhance mitochondrial function, reduce oxidative stress, and restore cellular energy balance. These dietary guidelines are backed by the latest research and provide practical, easy-to-follow advice tailored for your needs.

Beyond nutrition, “Cellular Health” offers a comprehensive approach to lifestyle modifications that promote cellular health. You will discover tailored exercise regimens that stimulate mitochondrial biogenesis and improve metabolic flexibility.

The book also provides techniques to enhance your sleep quality, ensuring that your mitochondria get the rest they need to function optimally. Additionally, you will find methods to reduce chronic stress, a major contributor to mitochondrial damage.

The book also provides effective detoxification protocols to help you eliminate environmental toxins that impair mitochondrial function. These protocols are designed to be safe and gradual, supporting your body's natural detox pathways. By following these protocols, you can help your body to better cope with the toxins it encounters daily.

“Cellular Health” compiles cutting-edge research on how to combat the effects of environmental toxins, poor diet, and sedentary lifestyle choices. As you read, you will find actionable steps and evidence-based recommendations that can make a real difference in your health journey. The goal is not just to inform but to empower you.

“Cellular Health” equips you with the knowledge and tools you need to truly take control of your health. By understanding the underlying mechanisms of disease and health, you can make informed decisions and take proactive steps toward a healthier, more vibrant life.

Ultimately, “Cellular Health” is about more than just overcoming the mitochondrial crisis. It’s about achieving ultimate longevity and joy by nurturing your body at the cellular level. The unified theory presented in the book integrates all aspects of health into a cohesive plan that is both practical and transformative.

By helping you understand how to listen to your body so you can follow your unique guidance you can begin to reverse the damage, restore your mitochondrial function, and pave the way for a healthier, longer, and more joyful life. This book is your comprehensive roadmap to overcoming the current health crisis and achieving optimal

well-being. It should be out later this summer, as the final draft is currently with the editors.

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