



### The Case for Wise Health Care Consumerism<sup>1</sup>

- The Department of Health & Human Services (DHSS) reported in 2011 that while outpatient doctor visits cost an average of around \$200, the cost of an ER visit costs an average of around \$1,000.
- 25% of all ER visits are thought to be unnecessary.
- With appropriate self-care knowledge and skills, patients can better assess when and how to treat oneself at home, when and when not to see a physician and when a real medical emergency occurs.
- A wise health care consumer can realize a substantial cost savings when it comes to healthcare!



*"I'll have an ounce of prevention."*

### How to be a wise healthcare consumer<sup>2</sup>

- **Does a recommended treatment make you uneasy?** Don't rush into important health decisions. Usually there will be time to carefully examine your alternatives. Ask: Why do I need this surgery? Are there any alternatives to this treatment? What are the risks and benefits? Get a second opinion, if necessary.

- **Feel out of control in your care?** Feeling out of control often has to do with a lack of knowledge. To learn more about your condition and how to self-manage it, contact a respected nonprofit group, such as the American Cancer Society or the American Heart Association, to request information. Go to reputable online sites. Visit with your local pharmacist.
- **The treatment your doctor prescribed isn't working?** Maybe it's the wrong treatment for you. Or, maybe you're taking the right treatment in the wrong way. In any case, your doctor needs to know. Ask him or her to clarify the treatment directions, or to suggest any available treatment alternatives.
- **Side effects seem worse than the cure?** Are you worried about the impact of medication side effects on your health or well-being? Are you cutting back on your prescription because of side effects? Again, let your doctor and pharmacist know. Perhaps there's a different pill you can take that's just as effective without side effects. Or, maybe the dosage can be changed.
- **Considering a "miracle" treatment?** The Internet is full of products that sound too good to be true, and are. Even television ads aren't always to be trusted. Be skeptical of "secret formulas," "scientific breakthroughs," "amazing results," and money-back guarantees. Consult your doctor or pharmacist before buying.
- **Not satisfied with your doctor?** If you don't believe your doctor is knowledgeable enough about your condition, consider looking for another doctor. You deserve a health care provider who explains things in a language you understand, listens and encourages questions, and supports you in self-managing your condition

1. DHSS; <http://archive.ahrq.gov/news/newsroom/news-and-numbers/042011.html>

2. University of Rochester Medical Center; <http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?ContentTypeID=1&ContentID=3083>