



Beyond Imaging – A Basic Health Primer

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When we rebranded ourselves as Picture This, our tagline became “Beyond Imaging”. The main reason was that medicine is so much more than just radiology therapy or a narrow subspecialty like say neurology or endocrinology. As doctors, we should also look at the bigger picture.

Our focus as doctors is almost always on treating patients. We are not used to working as “preventors”, people who can change the behavior of other people and improve disease-free life.

I am sure we are all aware that the big changes in improved overall human lifespan and reduced child mortality have had nothing to do with doctors and modern medicine, but are a function of social and political change; improved incomes, better sanitation, clean water, better nutrition, a roof over one's head, followed by other interventions such as vaccines, wearing of seat-belts, legislation preventing smoking in indoor commercial facilities, etc..

We play a small role in overall public health, but obviously a big role when people fall sick. But we can all make a difference by spreading the word about staying fit and healthy, which involves some very simple interventions.

1 Movement

Movement in any form has been shown to improve longevity and the quality of lived life. Whether it is running, walking, going to the gym, yoga, strength training, aerobics...it doesn't matter. Getting off the sofa and doing something with our bodies...that's all it takes to make a difference to improve cardiovascular health, mental health and to reduce the incidence of most forms of disease.

2. Sensible eating

This is not about any specific diet. Sensible controlled eating is about a balanced diet that involves freshly cooked, preferably home-cooked meals, without overeating. We also need to restrict eating anything that comes in a box or packet and reduce the amount we eat out. Patterns of eating like intermittent fasting also help.



3. Improved mental health

Meditation is equally important. Though the scientific data on the benefits of meditation are not as robust as with exercise and sensible eating, meditation in some form or the other, whether as part of a yoga session or using an app like Headspace always helps tune the mind and perhaps prevent cognitive impairment.

4. Stop smoking

Any intervention that can stop people from smoking and the young from starting to smoke makes a huge difference to overall health in all forms.

5. Cardiovascular health

Cardiovascular diseases are responsible for 28% of all deaths in India, in the form of strokes and myocardial infarcts and related diseases. If we can identify disease early (hypertension, diabetes, coronary artery disease) and institute intervention in the form of statins, aspirin and points no 1-4, we would be saving many, many lives and improving the quality of those lived lives.

In these unusual times, all of these issues are even more important than ever.

Stay safe and stay healthy!!!

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