Consumer Health

CHAPTER 1

SELF CARE: PRACTICING AND PREVENTION

What is Consumer Health?
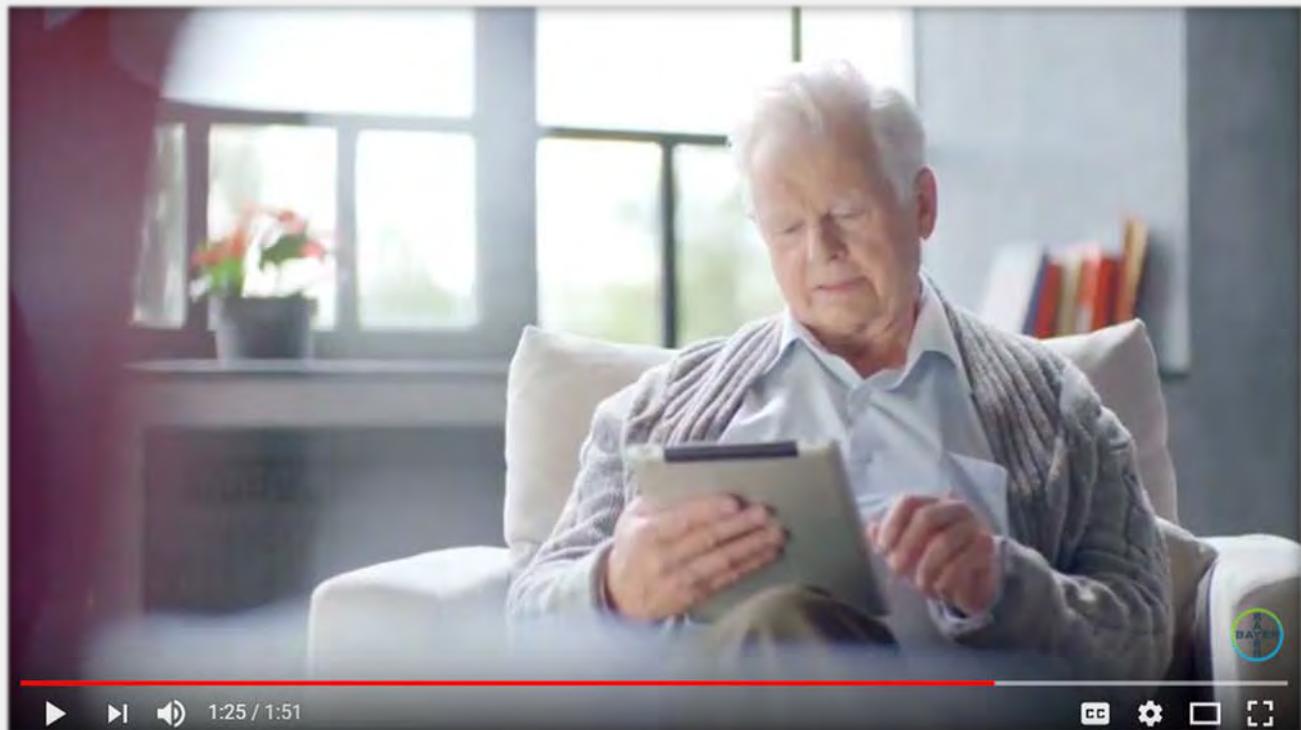
In today's world, there are many misconceptions about health and healthcare. Companies such as WebMD have leveraged technology to make medical information (and self-diagnoses) nearly ubiquitous. But in this information age, many people are finding it difficult to figure out which voices to listen to regarding their own health. The topic of consumer health refers to the analysis of the factors that affect an individual's health, from self-care to healthcare. With today's resources, proper health should be an attainable goal for nearly every person in this country. By studying the different ways that people's interactions with healthcare institutions, the general medical media, and "traditional medicines" can affect healthcare outcomes, we can take steps towards achieving this noble goal.

Choosing Self Care

- ❖ When choosing self-care, it is important to remember that the most effective form is preventative care.

- ❖ There are many things one can do to prevent issues from popping up in the first place, from proper nutrition, to exercising, to avoiding high risk behaviors such as drinking and smoking.

- ❖ However, there are many factors that people tend to forget about. These may include maintaining healthy relationships, finding outlets to relieve stress or avoiding it altogether, and following a consistent and sufficient sleep schedule.

- ❖ Online health resources are also vital pieces of the self-care puzzle. Learning to vet different resources on your own is crucial to make the most of the tools available and avoid making bad health choices based on misinformation.

- ❖ Some factors to consider when evaluating a site or article for the first time include the source itself, possible motivations for writing about that particular topic, the presence (or lack thereof) of objective facts, and how long ago the piece was written.

Options for Self-Care

❖ When you've done your research, the next step is to take action based on your findings.

❖ Most of the time, taking action will involve some type of OTC, or over-the-counter, medicine from a drugstore.

❖ Be sure to read up on what you need ahead of time, and if you are buying a generic product, make sure the active ingredient matches up with your intended purchase.

❖ Also, make sure to check the recommended usage instructions and possible side effects; always follow the instructions on the bottle, or you could end up doing damage to your liver, or worse, end up in the hospital.

❖ You can also pick up many home tests to assess your health without going to the doctor. The most common are blood pressure armbands, pregnancy tests, and blood sugar monitors.

❖ These tests should be used routinely in between check-ups, and not as a replacement altogether; always consult your doctor right away if you have any questions about these tests or your own health.

Conventional Medicine

Conventional medicine is comprised of the set of standards and best practices established through the scientific method, focusing on identifying cause and effect relationships between factor inputs and health outcomes. It is also known as Western medicine. Intermediate steps include x-rays and blood tests, while final steps can include surgery, rehabilitation, prescription drugs, and more. This type of healthcare is the one most commonly covered (at least in part) by most insurance plans. Choosing a conventional healthcare provider is arguably just as important as vetting your personal healthcare information sources, but entails a very similar process. Make sure that the clinic or practice you plan to attend will accept your insurance plan, and get an idea of the type of premium you can expect to pay for routine check-ups as well as larger operations. Look up the clinic online to see who the staff are; look for the schools they attended, qualifications they have received, and longevity in their current position.