

PREVENTION IN TRANSITION

Stable routines for unstable times

By Jakub Samochowiec, Marta Kwiatkowski and Detlef Gürtler



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Starting the day with coffee



10% Drinking coffee is the first thing 10% of
the respondents do in the morning.

Survey among 3035 Austrians, conducted by Marketagent, see page 6

Preface

Dear Sir or Madam,

Stable routines are the mainstays of our daily work. Here at Curaden, the Swiss provider of holistic concepts, services and products for oral health, we have known this ever since the start of our business activities some fifty years ago. That is why we support the study from the GDI.

We are convinced that prevention is the key to a more humane and cost-effective form of health care. The realities on the supply side look different, however. Whether in the world of politics, in health care practices or in universities, prevention is not accorded the importance that it deserves. This is for differing reasons, but largely due to insufficient or incorrect financial incentives. Prevention – such as we understand it – is the enemy of treatment. The pressure on the demand side is growing, however, accompanied by the knowledge of the public about their own health and the decisive factors in this respect. We believe that the development is heading in the right direction – and that the current crisis, which is creating so much instability, will help to speed up the intolerably slow pace of this change.

Prevention is our guiding principle, and “Better health for you” is our claim. As the world’s leading company in dentist-recommended oral care, please permit us to take a brief detour into oral health. It has been scientifically proven that its importance has direct links to general human health. The quality of the bacterial flora in the mouth determines the intestinal flora. Diseases of the periodontium affect the metabolism, the lungs and the blood vessels. Studies have demonstrated the link between cardiovascular disease and diseases of the mouth. Conversely, both

physical and psychological complaints can aggravate periodontitis. With good oral hygiene and nutrition, we ourselves can contribute to preventing inflammations. Prevention is the key.

Here at Curaden, we are dedicated to oral health, but we also think in terms of the future, and to a time when prevention will account for more than just about two percent of total health care spending.

We wish you happy reading. With kind regards,



Ueli Breitschmid
Owner, Curaden AG, Schweiz



Denis Bourgeois
Scientific Advisory Board

Further information about Curaden and its philosophy is available at:

www.curaden.com, www.curaprox.com

Executive summary

Our behaviour is largely determined by habit: behavioural patterns repeated on a daily basis, which are hardly ever questioned because they happen ‘on autopilot’. Many behavioural patterns promoting health must be made into habits in order to be stable in the long term.

We can rely on our habits when we have stable day-to-day routines. But what happens in times of upheaval, when our environment suddenly changes? This can happen through events in our personal lives, such as changing jobs, splitting up with a partner, or moving home, or if our environment as a whole becomes unstable, as it might through climate change or a changed world of work.

In view of such new overall conditions, we must then recalibrate our behaviour as well. This poses the risk that habits promoting health may be lost – but it also offers a window of opportunity for exercising desirable habits. So it is a matter of practising resilient health behaviour that not only withstands change but also makes use of the malleability of habits in order to change one’s behaviour in a positive direction.

The coronavirus crisis offered the opportunity to observe changes in behaviour, habits, and rituals in dramatically changed environmental conditions in time lapse. A review of studies conducted during the pandemic shows that many people changed their behaviour as a result of the pandemic. But these changes did not always have a clear direction. Some people displayed more healthy, others less healthy behaviour.

What then are the decisive factors for people to change their behaviour in a positive or a negative way? Studies conducted during the pandemic identify several factors promoting stability of be-

haviour or even a positive change. These include mental health, social integration, education and income, age and gender.

Many of these factors correlate with a capacity for self-regulation. That capacity, however, is not fixed but is itself malleable. On the one hand, economic and social security can ensure resilience in health behaviour. On the other hand, mindfulness training, ritualising behaviours, identifying with one’s own behaviour, and making plans can be learned.

The more the world changes, the more effective and the more important prevention becomes.

In a concluding scenario, we sketch what tomorrow’s world may look like if the factors discussed are implemented in health prevention. In that scenario, much greater importance is attached to prevention than is the case today, and the promotion of health is viewed in a more holistic way. We limit ourselves to factors within the scope of action of individuals. In the scenario, the settings for such individual action are divided into the categories of motivation, capability, and opportunity.

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