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Health As The Greatest Treasure: Universal Healthcare, Holistic Well-Being, & The Right To Health

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Abstract

Health is the condition that makes life not only longer, but more meaningful. Yet in many societies, people still treat health as secondary to careers, wealth, and achievement until illness or exhaustion forces the issue. This paper argues that universal healthcare should be recognised as a fundamental right because access to health is essential to human dignity, equality, and participation in social life. Universal health coverage, as defined by the World Health Organisation, means that all people should be able to access the full range of quality health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship.¹ International human rights law likewise recognises the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.² Building on these frameworks, the paper presents a holistic model of health that includes physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, and digital well-being. It also emphasises prevention, health literacy, and everyday habits as critical complements to formal healthcare. In addition, the paper integrates a journey-based framework for health transformation, showing how emotional awareness, scientific understanding, disciplined motivation, and spiritual grounding can help people move from passive living to intentional health stewardship. The paper concludes that a just society must do more than treat illness when it appears; it must create systems and cultures that make health accessible,

sustainable, and meaningful for all. Through this lens, health is not merely a private asset but a shared treasure that deserves protection at both personal and public levels.

Keywords: *universal healthcare, right to health, human dignity, health equity, holistic well-being, universal health coverage, preventive care, health literacy, mental health, spiritual well-being, social well-being, digital well-being, healthcare access, public health, health justice*

1. Introduction

Health is the treasure of life. That simple statement contains a deep truth: human beings can accumulate knowledge, money, status, and influence, yet if health is neglected, all those achievements become difficult to enjoy. A person can own many things and still feel poor if the body is weak, the mind is exhausted, or the spirit is empty. Health, by contrast, allows ordinary moments to become meaningful and difficult moments to become survivable. It is the condition that makes life not only longer, but fuller.

This paper argues that universal healthcare should be understood as a fundamental right because health is central to human dignity, equal participation, and social justice. The World Health Organisation defines universal health coverage as access to the full range of quality health services people need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship.¹ International human rights instruments likewise recognise the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.² These commitments show that healthcare is not merely a consumer good or a private luxury. It is a moral obligation of society.

At the same time, this paper argues that health must be understood holistically. Health is not simply the absence of disease. The World Health Organisation defines it as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being.³ Holistic health expands this further by recognising the role of emotional balance, spiritual grounding, habits, and digital discipline. An individual may be free from a diagnosed illness and still not be well if they are chronically stressed, isolated, sleep-deprived, or overwhelmed by unhealthy routines.⁴ A proper understanding of health must therefore include both the systems that provide care and the daily practices that sustain life.

The urgency of this argument is obvious in modern life. People live faster, work longer, and often rest less. They chase promotions, degrees, and lifestyles that promise fulfilment, yet many sacrifice their most precious asset in the process: their health. That sacrifice is often invisible until it becomes costly. Preventive care is quiet. Illness is loud. A humane society must therefore protect

¹ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No 14: The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health (Art 12)* (11 August 2000) UN Doc E/C.12/2000/4.

² United Nations, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966), art. 12.

³ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (adopted 10 December 1948 UNGA Res 217 A(III)) art 25.

⁴ George L. Engel, "The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine," *Science* 196, no. 4286 (1977): 129–136.

health before crisis arrives. Universal healthcare is an essential part of that protection, while self-care, health literacy, and community support are equally important.

2. Health as Wealth

Health is real wealth. Mahatma Gandhi's famous statement remains powerful because it captures a truth that economic life alone cannot explain. Gold and silver may purchase comfort, but they cannot create vitality. Money may buy treatment, but it cannot fully restore time lost to neglect. A healthy body and mind are what make wealth usable, relationships enjoyable, and purpose sustainable. Without health, even success can feel hollow. With health, even a simple life can feel rich.

This is why many people only recognise the value of health after losing it. They may have spent years building careers, accumulating possessions, or pursuing recognition while ignoring the daily practices that maintain well-being. They postpone sleep, eat poorly, move too little, and live under chronic stress, believing that the body will keep up indefinitely. But the body remembers what the mind ignores. Over time, neglect produces fatigue, illness, anxiety, reduced immunity, and burnout. The phrase "health is the treasure of life" therefore offers more than sentiment. It expresses a principle of stewardship. Treasures are protected before they are lost. They are valued daily, not only when damage appears. If health is truly our deepest wealth, then it should be guarded with the same seriousness with which people treat important investments. A healthy life is not a luxury life. It is the foundation of all meaningful life.

3. Beyond the Absence of Disease

The World Health Organization's definition of health as complete physical, mental, and social well-being remains one of the most important statements in modern public health.⁵ It rejects the reduction of health to disease management alone. A person may receive a clean bill of health in one sense while still feeling emotionally depleted, socially disconnected, or spiritually uncentered. The WHO definition insists that health is broader than pathology.

This broader view is essential because modern life often fragments the person. People speak about bodies in clinics, minds in therapy rooms, social belonging in classrooms, and purpose in religious or philosophical settings. Those distinctions can be useful, but they can also obscure the deep interconnectedness of human life. Sleep affects mood. Mood affects food choices. Food affects energy. Stress affects immunity. Digital stimulation affects rest. Social support affects recovery. Health is not a set of separate parts; it is a living pattern of relationships among them.

The older meaning of "health" as wholeness and soundness helps explain why holistic approaches

⁵ World Health Organization, *Universal Health Coverage*, accessed July 20, 2026, <https://www.who.int/health-topics/universal-health-coverage>.

remain persuasive. A healthy person is not simply someone whose organs function adequately. A healthy person is someone whose life is broadly integrated, adaptive, and sustainable. This is why the current language of wellness has become so popular. People intuitively know that good health cannot be reduced to test results. They are looking for balance, resilience, and meaning.

Holistic health also includes dimensions often overlooked in conventional discussions: emotional regulation, spiritual nourishment, and digital boundaries. In a world of constant notifications and continuous performance, silence has become rare and therefore valuable. People need time to think, to rest, to reflect, and to reconnect with themselves. A holistic health ethic does not treat this as indulgence. It treats it as maintenance of the soul.

4. The Journey of Health

Health is best understood as a journey rather than a fixed state. Imagine a journey where every craving, every emotion, and every setback becomes a stepping stone toward unlocking the healthiest version of yourself. This is not a story of rigid rules. It is an invitation to adventure. It asks people to move from passive living to active health stewardship, from autopilot to awareness, from self-blame to self-understanding.

The journey begins with a change in posture toward one's own life. Instead of asking only, "What should I stop doing?" one begins to ask, "What is my body telling me? What are my habits saying? What am I trying to soothe, escape, or express?" This shift is powerful because it turns health from a discipline of punishment into a discipline of discovery.

A journey model also makes room for complexity. People are not machines that fail only because they lack willpower. They are emotional, social, biological, and spiritual beings who respond to stress, habit, memory, environment, and meaning. When health transformation is framed as a journey, setbacks become informative rather than devastating. A missed workout, a poor meal, or a sleepless night is not the end of the story. It is a chapter, not the conclusion.

This is why the language of health should be hopeful. People change more sustainably when they believe transformation is possible. If health education feels like condemnation, many will resist it. If it feels like a journey of wisdom, many will enter it willingly. The journey metaphor opens the door to compassion, persistence, and growth.

5. Emotional Signals

The first part of the health journey is emotional awareness. Why do people eat when they are sad, bored, lonely, angry, or celebrating? Because food is often connected to emotion, memory, comfort, and reward. Emotional eating is not simply a matter of weakness. It is often a sign that a person is using food to regulate an inner state.

This is where curiosity becomes essential. Instead of asking, "What is wrong with me?" a person

can ask, “What am I feeling right now?” That question changes everything. It turns shame into observation and observation into choice. The person begins to notice patterns: certain stressors lead to certain cravings; certain moods lead to certain habits; certain people or situations lead to certain responses. Once the pattern becomes visible, change becomes possible.

In this sense, a person becomes a detective in their own story. They observe their triggers, decode their emotional signals, and respond with curiosity and compassion. This approach matters because self-criticism rarely creates lasting change. Compassion, on the other hand, makes room for honesty. A person can be honest about unhealthy habits without turning those habits into identity. Emotional resilience also grows in this process. People learn that feelings are real but not always commanding. The presence of sadness does not require impulsive eating. The presence of stress does not require surrender. The presence of boredom does not require numbness. Emotional awareness gives people the space to respond rather than react.

6. The Science of Temptation

The second part of the journey is understanding why some foods seem to call to us so loudly. The answer lies partly in biology and partly in design. Human beings are wired to seek pleasure, energy, and reward. Modern food environments know this and often intensify those impulses. Many highly processed foods are engineered to be immediately appealing, hyper-palatable, and easy to overconsume.

Science can be intimidating when it is presented as a wall of facts. But in health education, science should be empowering. When people understand why cravings happen, how marketing works, and how food labels are structured, they gain agency. They are less likely to feel tricked or helpless. They can read packaging with more discernment and make choices based on understanding rather than impulse.

This is why health literacy is so important. People do not need to become scientists to live wisely, but they do need to learn how to read evidence, evaluate advice, and recognise manipulation. Once they know how to interpret labels and claims, they can make simple, repeatable changes that support long-term health. The point is not perfection. The point is clarity.

The science of temptation also reduces shame. Many people assume they are morally weak because they struggle with food. But the modern food environment is designed to shape behaviour. This does not remove responsibility, but it does place responsibility in context. People are easier to help when we understand the systems that influence them.

7. Mind and Motivation

The third part of the journey is the mind. When it comes to transforming health, the mind is often the secret weapon. Yet many people misunderstand motivation. They assume that health failures

happen because they lack enough willpower. Willpower alone is fragile. It can be overwhelmed by fatigue, stress, habit, and environment.

A more durable model of change focuses on identity, structure, and repetition. People do not change only because they feel inspired. They change because new habits become easier, new beliefs become believable, and new routines become normal. This is why the myth of willpower can be harmful. It oversimplifies human behaviour and makes people blame themselves for systemic and psychological obstacles.

Healthy motivation grows when people see themselves differently. Instead of saying, “I am someone who always fails,” they begin to say, “I am learning how to care for myself.” Instead of framing food as morality, they frame it as nourishment. Instead of seeing exercise as punishment, they see it as support. Instead of calling a meal “cheating,” they ask whether their choices are sustainable and balanced. Language shapes behaviour.

The mind becomes powerful when it stops chasing perfection and starts building consistency. A growth-oriented mindset recognises that health is not a one-time achievement. It is a process of alignment. The more a person practices that alignment, the more natural it becomes.

8. Soul and Silence

The fourth part of the journey is the soul. In a noisy digital world, quiet has become an essential part of health. Many people live in a constant state of interruption. They move from notification to notification, from screen to screen, from task to task. Even when they rest, they do not always recover. Their attention remains divided.

This is why spiritual nourishment and digital boundaries matter. The soul needs space. It needs silence. It needs moments that are not immediately monetised, evaluated, or measured. A digital detox can be one way to reclaim that space. It allows people to step away from endless stimulation and return to themselves.

Spiritual well-being is not limited to religious practice, though it may include it. It also includes purpose, reflection, gratitude, meaning, and the experience of being rooted in something larger than immediate gratification. When people feel spiritually grounded, they often handle stress better, make wiser choices, and recover more steadily from hardship.

Technology can support this process if used wisely. Mindfulness apps, sleep trackers, and habit monitors can be useful tools. But technology should remain a servant, not a master. Digital well-being means knowing when to unplug, when to rest, and when to let silence restore the inner life. In this sense, boundaries are not restrictions; they are forms of protection.

9. Integrating the Whole Person

The deepest health vision is one in which body, mind, emotion, and spirit move in harmony. These

dimensions are not separate departments. They form one life. When one is neglected, the others often suffer. When one is strengthened, the others often benefit.

This integrated view is why simple routines matter so much. A routine creates rhythm. A tracker creates awareness. A plan creates direction. A community creates support. Together, they turn transformation from a distant hope into a daily practice. This is where lasting change becomes real. The holistic model also resists extremes. A person can become obsessed with diet but neglect rest. Another can focus on exercise but ignore emotional stress. Another can appear spiritually calm while being digitally overwhelmed. Health calls us to balance these dimensions. It asks us to care for the whole person, not just the visible part.

When health is understood this way, it becomes less intimidating and more human. The goal is not to become flawless. The goal is to become more alive, more resilient, and more connected. That is a more realistic and more inspiring vision of wellness.

10. Purpose and Meaning

Health is deeply tied to purpose. Every human being has dreams, but those dreams depend on the ability to live them. A person with poor health may still desire to create, serve, learn, and love, but the energy to do so becomes limited. Health therefore gives life direction as well as capacity.

Purpose is important because people are more likely to protect what feels meaningful. If health is framed only as avoiding disease, many people tune out. If health is framed as the condition that allows purpose, joy, contribution, and love, people are more likely to care. Health becomes not a burden but a path to a fuller life.

This is why many people with wealth still feel empty. Material success alone does not guarantee vitality or satisfaction. Some people reach the heights of public achievement while privately struggling with fatigue, illness, anxiety, or regret. That is why the warning “my worst investment has been my health” resonates so strongly. It expresses a painful truth: health cannot always be purchased back once it is seriously lost.

That truth should not produce despair. It should produce urgency. Prevention matters because life is finite. The time we have is precious. The best use of that time is to live it well, not merely to fill it with activity.⁶

11. Universal Healthcare as Shared Responsibility

The structural side of this argument is universal healthcare. Even the most disciplined self-care cannot eliminate all illness or guarantee access to treatment. A person may live wisely and still require surgery, medication, mental health support, or long-term care. If healthcare is a right, then society has a duty to make that care accessible to all, not only to those who can pay.

⁶ World Health Organization, *World Health Statistics 2024: Monitoring Health for the SDGs* (WHO 2024).

Universal healthcare is a practical expression of justice. It means that illness should not become financial ruin. It means people should not have to choose between treatment and survival. It means the poor, vulnerable, disabled, and marginalised should not be left behind. In a humane society, access to essential care should not depend on privilege.

This is not only morally compelling; it is socially sensible. Healthy populations are more stable, more productive, and more resilient. Universal healthcare can reduce avoidable suffering, improve early intervention, and strengthen public trust. It creates a baseline of security that allows people to live and work with greater confidence.⁷

Universal healthcare also reflects a truth already present in the rights framework: dignity should not be conditional. Human beings are not valuable only if they are profitable, productive, or fortunate. They are valuable because they are human. Healthcare systems should embody that principle.

12. Conclusion

Health is the greatest treasure because it makes every other treasure meaningful. It allows education to be pursued, work to be sustained, relationships to flourish, and purpose to be lived. Without health, life narrows. With health, life opens.

This paper has argued that universal healthcare should be understood as a fundamental right and that health should be understood holistically. It has shown that health is more than disease prevention. It is emotional awareness, scientific understanding, disciplined habits, spiritual grounding, community support, and access to care. It is both personal and social. It is both a journey and a right. If health is the treasure of life, then society must treat it that way. That means teaching people to care for themselves wisely, building communities that support healthy living, and creating systems that ensure no one is denied essential care. It means choosing prevention over neglect, compassion over blame, and dignity over exclusion. It means recognising that the healthiest version of us is not a fantasy. It is a future we can build, one mindful step at a time.

⁷ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 3 January 1976) 993 UNTS 3, art 12.