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AS PRESIDENT SPEAKS ON HEALTH REFORM, AMERICAN DIETETIC ASSOCIATION RECOMMENDS WAYS TO IMPROVE SYSTEM, REDUCE COSTS, OPTIMIZE HEALTH

CHICAGO – Health-care costs in the United States continue to rise more rapidly than virtually any other. In the unique environment that now exists in Washington, D.C., and the states for reforming the nation’s health system, the American Dietetic Association welcomes President Barack Obama’s call on Monday, June 15, for comprehensive efforts that will curb costs and help people get and stay healthier.

“The American Dietetic Association believes the goal for health reform must be to improve the health and quality of life for all Americans,” said registered dietitian and American Dietetic Association President Jessie M. Pavlinac. “Policies that keep people healthy and prevent disease must be central to our efforts. Our message to policy makers is: ‘Get the fundamentals right.’

“As the President has said, health reform is no longer just a moral imperative, it is a fiscal imperative. It is exciting that Congress and the White House are both discussing true changes to the way the U.S. delivers health care. In particular, it is clear that prevention will take on a large role,” Pavlinac said.

“Nearly half the people in the United States suffer from preventable chronic conditions. That helps explain why chronic disease accounts for 75 percent of health-care spending,” Pavlinac said. “Many of the most common and costly conditions are linked to diet. As we see the life expectancy of our children declining, due largely to excess weight and obesity, we know it is time to act, even if the magnitude of these problems defies easy remedy.

“It is a better strategy to prevent excess weight and obesity than attempt to treat them, and nutrition is the cornerstone of prevention,” Pavlinac said.

“The solution to preventing excess weight is more complex than eating less,” Pavlinac said. “It is about eating right. American adults and children are overweight and undernourished. Many of us eat too many calories, but not enough of certain food groups or key nutrients needed for healthy growth and development.”

Nutrition intervention via the services of a registered dietitian can prevent or delay the onset and severity of many costly diseases and conditions. “Registered dietitians are trained to work with people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures in ways that support individuals making informed decisions about their own health through food and activity choices,” Pavlinac said.

Pavlinac said making nutrition a health-care reform priority can help all Americans by:

- Focusing on keeping people well first; then a continuum of approaches for the patient to be able to manage his or her health.
- Providing access to high quality health services provided by health teams that include registered dietitians
- Providing health information technology to capture nutrition-related data that enhances health professionals’ ability to help people and advance understanding of the science.

“These steps are smart, cost-effective and the right thing to do,” Pavlinac said.

The American Dietetic Association is the world’s largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. ADA is committed to improving the nation’s health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy. Visit the American Dietetic Association at www.eatright.org.

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