



Striding Toward Prevention

When an injury and foot surgery made running painful for **Mark Cucuzella, MD, FAAFP**, a family medicine physician in Shepardstown, W.Va., the former college track and distance runner began to research Kenyan runners' stride patterns and the minimal shoes they wear. Cucuzella has become a major force behind the minimalist running movement, which encourages building a strong foot foundation with minimal shoe support. He is a professor of family medicine at the West Virginia School of Medicine and physician at Jefferson Medical Center, a 25-staffed-bed critical access and teaching hospital, and also is a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force Reserve, where he runs a program teaching efficient running that focuses on injury prevention and increased performance. He says physicians should be

advocates and champions of prevention-based medicine in their communities.

On getting your white coat dirty: Break free from the walls of the clinic. As much as you give, you learn, and it's the only way to see what the real issues are. If you don't understand the barriers in your community, you're not going to connect and be a part of the change. People are waiting for big government to mandate stuff, but it doesn't work that way. We have to be out there being leaders and promoters.

On reducing cost of care: Most runners go to running shoe stores for their injuries because many doctors just tell them to stop running. We should focus on preventing—not treating—illness and injury. Joint replacement: You

could feed the world with the joint replacement industry. But just think if you replaced this method of treatment with a reexamination of biomechanics. The people who stop exercising are at greater odds of getting heart disease and other metabolic illnesses, not just morbidity but costly morbidity. We all live too short and die too long. Exercise is huge. If it were a pill it would be the No. 1 seller.

On listening to patients: The "medical home" extends to the backyard. It's where you run around and play. The main function of clinics is to treat disease and illness, not necessarily to promote healthy lives. We know by the data that treatment-oriented approach often falls short. It's not about providing more expensive care; it's about finding the problem in how we take care of ourselves. —**CHELSEA RICE**
Reprint HLR070813-12