

# Peak Oil Issues

## Healthcare

As the cost of energy increases, the NHS will require more and more investment.

During a recession there are fewer jobs and lower profits for corporations. This means there is less money going to the government in the form of taxation. At the moment the government aims to spend £90 billion per year by 2007/2008.

As the cost of energy increases, and along with it everything from electronic equipment to plastic syringes, the NHS will require more and more money in order to provide a static level of service. To provide an improved service, the added investment required will become astronomical.

It is likely that we will see many hospital closures over the coming years as the cost of providing universal healthcare escalates. It may be that we see an end to the 'free at the point of delivery' philosophy which was fundamental to the formation of the NHS.

Private healthcare will also suffer due to higher costs and taxes and health insurance companies will be more reluctant to pay out, thus delaying some treatments. All of this will be happening at a time of growing rates of Alcohol and Drug abuse, which carry other risks like disease and violence.

We may see a move to more home-based healthcare, with programs like the NHS Direct hotline becoming more popular. General hygiene will be extremely important as prevention of illness may be far more desirable than cure or treatment. Fitness regimes and good dietary knowledge are going to be very important in the coming years. Healthcare will once again be dictated by need, although the very

wealthy will still be able to afford the more frivolous treatments, at least in the short term.

Alternative therapies may become more popular, not just because of fashion, but out of necessity. Treatments such as herbal remedies, traditional cold cures and acupuncture may become more ordinary. Looking after our health will be about drawing on as many resources as we have in our local area. Plant extracts will be used where drugs from a bottle are either very expensive or in short supply.

Perhaps of greater concern are treatments like kidney dialysis or tumour scans. Cancer or HIV treatment could become a luxury few can afford. These types of care require significant amounts of energy and expertise.

None of this is going to happen overnight, but the general trend will be in this direction. You can use this knowledge to prepare yourself for a lower-energy life. The message here is to start thinking about your health, ensure you and those around you have a high standard of hygiene, take regular exercise, get plenty of fresh air, eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, and maybe even think about investing in a couple of herbal medicine books.



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