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## Merging economics and health

***Paul Zane Pilzer made millions in real estate before turning to wellness.***

### **DAVE GORDON**

*Dave Gordon is a freelance writer who has written for the Baltimore Sun, the Forward and the National Post, among many others*

Not only can Paul Zane Pilzer help guide you to a life of riches, he can also guide you to a rich life. Pilzer has become a renowned author on economy and, more recently, on nutrition and diet with his book *The Wellness Revolution* (Wiley, 2002).

The world-renowned economist and nutrition expert speaks live each year to about a half million people and more than 10 million tapes of his speeches have been sold. He is also a software entrepreneur, an insurance salesman and the author of three best-selling books.

"I became an economist to find answers to the questions that people wanted answered. When my family got together over dinner, we didn't talk about family. We talked about how to get a job and how to buy a car," said the 51-year-old Pilzer, who is now teaching economics at the University of Utah.

Success came early for Pilzer, and over the past three decades, he's been constantly building on that success. Having completed college in three years, he received his MBA from Wharton in 15 months, at age 22. At age 24, he was appointed adjunct professor at New York University, where he taught for the next 20 years.

In addition, Pilzer was Citibank's youngest officer, at 22, and its youngest vice-president, at 25. During that time, he started several businesses – earning his first million before age 26 (in real estate, renting out summer homes on Long Island). He made his first \$10 million before he was 30.

Over the past 20 years, he has started or taken public five companies dealing in software,

education and financial services. He was an appointed economic advisor during two presidential administrations (Reagan and Bush Sr.) and warned of the impending \$200 billion savings and loan crisis years before Washington was willing to listen. It was a story that he later told in *Other People's Money* (Simon & Schuster, 1989), which was critically acclaimed by the *New York Times* and the *Economist*.

Pilzer's book *Unlimited Wealth* (Crown Publishers, 1990) explained how we live in a world of unlimited physical resources because of rapidly advancing technology. In *Unlimited Wealth*, he postulates that our resources are infinite because of scientific advances that increase growth. The proof is in the pudding: when car companies used the new scientific advance of fuel injection, they got double the gas efficiency. For another example, new machines have made companies more efficient.

"When a company laid someone off, it meant that the company was going out of business in the old days. These days, when people are laid off, the company replaces them with machines. Who do you lay off? You lay off the least productive."

Pilzer was ridiculed in 1990 on the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*, "but in 1996 the same ideas in a subsequent book made the front page of the *Journal*, as if they were commonly accepted items," he said.

In *God Wants You to be Rich* (Simon & Schuster, 1997), Pilzer explained how the foundation of the North American economic system is based on Judeo-Christian heritage. He believes that a good and just Creator would not allow humans to do without, therefore we are given the potential to be as wealthy as anyone else. This *New York Times* business best-seller was featured on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* and on television shows such as *60 Minutes*. It has been published in 18 languages.

After giving a speech about economics to an audience in Indianapolis in 1996, Pilzer realized that economics lessons weren't what they really needed. He saw overweight people who were uneducated about food and health. He then switched gears from economics to nutrition and wrote *The Wellness Revolution*. In it, Pilzer identifies the newly emerging "wellness" business and explains how wellness entrepreneurs can find their fortunes.

Already a \$200 billion business, with most of its revenue coming from vitamin sales and health club memberships, the health industry is just now taking off. One-seventh (\$1.5 trillion) of the U.S. economy today is devoted to the health-care business, what Pilzer refers to as the "sickness industry." By 2010, an additional trillion dollars of the economy will be devoted to products and services that keep us healthy, make us look or feel better, slow down the effects of aging and prevent diseases from developing altogether. The implications of the shift to wellness are far reaching. Currently, most people in the Western world react only when they are stricken with an ailment.

"Most of the one-seventh of the adult population that work in the health-care industry focus on treating the symptoms of disease rather than preventing disease. This is because

it is more profitable for medical companies to research and develop products to create customers for life," said Pilzer.

Statistics say that more than half of the population in the United States is considered overweight and about a third of the population is obese.

"A powerful trillion dollar food industry bombards us with messages calculated to make us eat more, and of the wrong kinds of foods," argues Pilzer. "Company chemists ensure that [people] will never be satisfied with eating just a healthy amount of food. This causes great over-consumption, promoting obesity, and destroys the natural tendency of our taste buds to seek variety in what we eat."

Over the short term, vitamin deficiencies manifest themselves as mood swings, lack of energy, joint pain and thousands of other ailments that medical science tells us to accept as a consequence of advancing age. Over time, these deficiencies may cause cancer and heart disease.

"This is like a plague," Pilzer said.

Food companies, Pilzer contends, are taking advantage of people's bad health habits by manipulating information to use against the consumer. When the public became aware that too much dietary fat was a major cause of obesity, the food industry reacted with enticing low-fat foods, advertising that consumers could eat as much as they wanted without gaining weight. The industry repackaged foods that never had fat in them in the first place, like sugar-coated candies, suggesting they were a new, healthier version. What the industry didn't let on was that these products had extremely high levels of sugar, which turn to fat when ingested by the body.

"Unhealthy people are oppressed more than any dictator in history ever oppressed a people," said Pilzer. "They're clueless as to what to do to solve the problem. They can't get a job or a relationship and they have low self-esteem. I've met no one who has said they love being overweight."

Ironically, Pilzer has acted as an economics consultant for food companies; according to him, he was unaware, at the time, of what they were doing with the economic analyses he gave them.

While people are gobbling up copies of his newest book, Pilzer wants to take life one bite at a time.

"I don't think I want to be known in the end as this huge millionaire or be well known," he said. "I just want, in the end, to be known as a good husband to my wife and a good father to my kids."

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