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December 14, 2015 E-Newsletter

Letter signed by **Congressmen Langevin, Cicilline & Others**

**Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515
December 4th, 2015**

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan Speaker of the House
H-232 The Capitol Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan,

The United States has a moral imperative to be a safe-haven for those seeking refuge from violence abroad. As the civil war in Syria reaches its fifth year, and ISIS attempts to gain a foothold through its systemic practice of persecution and extreme violence, millions of innocent Syrians have been forced to leave their home country. The challenge to take in these refugees is global in scale. The United States, as the world's lone superpower, has the obligation to do its part.

Given this responsibility, we respectfully urge you to reject attempts to use critical year-end spending legislation to block the acceptance of refugees, including attempts to defund critical accounts or efforts to make it harder for refugees of a certain religion to seek sanctuary in the United States. Rather, we believe that funds available for the vetting and placement of refugees should be increased to ensure a thorough and expeditious process.

We should all agree that inserting wholesale changes to refugee admission policies into a year-end spending bill - where they cannot be properly debated or amended - is not the appropriate way to consider these issues.

Congress should not attempt to strong-arm the President into turning his back on Syrian families desperately seeking refuge from violence and persecution by threatening to shut down the government unless he acquiesces to their demands.

Sincerely,

This letter was signed by 86 Congressional Members including Congressmen Langevin & Cicilline.
Thank you Seth Klaiman, Congressman Langevin's RI District Director for sharing this.

Tell Congress enough is enough!

Perhaps you heard about Martin Shkreli, the hedge fund manager who raised the price of a life-saving medication from \$13 to \$750 because his company needed to "increase revenue."

But Martin Shkreli isn't alone. Too many pharmaceutical companies are drastically raising the prices of their prescription drugs and raking in billions in profit. Of course excessive profits come at the expense of public health. **Last year alone, 35 MILLION people did not fill a prescription because they could not afford it.**



Rich Fiesta

Tell Congress enough is enough! It is time to hold the pharmaceutical industry accountable. These companies cannot be allowed to rake in billions in profits while price gouging our nation's most vulnerable.

At a time when retirees are struggling to meet their out-of-pocket health care costs, **Congress is doing nothing to address the financial abuses of the pharmaceutical industry.**

Big Pharma will do anything to protect its profits. In fact, Pfizer, the largest pharmaceutical company in the world, is merging with an overseas company and moving their headquarters overseas to avoid taxes on their \$148 billion in profits.

The pharmaceutical industry has spent millions to influence Congress. We need your help to combat them. Please take action and tell Congress to put public interest ahead of corporate profits.

Together we can hold drug companies and their CEOs accountable.

Sincerely, Richard Fiesta, Executive Director, Alliance for Retired Americans

Social Security says reporting changes is your responsibility

Latest post on Social Security blog points out life changes can affect your benefits

by Doug Walker, Deputy Commissioner, Communications



If you receive benefits from Social Security, you have a legal obligation to report changes, which could affect your eligibility for disability, retirement, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.

You must report any changes that may affect your benefits immediately, and no later than 10 days after the end of the month in which the change occurred.

Changes you need to report range from a change of address to traveling outside the United States for 30 consecutive days. To get a list of reporting responsibilities under disability, please read our publication [What You Need to Know When You get Social Security Disability Benefits](#), and for SSI, read [What You Need to Know When You Get Supplemental Security Income](#). If you're receiving retirement benefits, [What You Need to Know When You Get Retirement or Survivors Benefits](#) is also helpful.

Life changes can affect your benefits. You may be due additional payments, or you may be overpaid and have to pay us back because you didn't report the overpayment in a timely manner. The SSI program may apply a penalty that will reduce your benefits if you fail to report a change, or if you reported the change later than 10 days after the end of the month in which the change occurred.

If you fail to report changes in a timely way, or if you intentionally make a false statement, we may stop your SSI, disability, and retirement benefits. We may also impose a sanction against your payments. The first sanction is a loss of payments for six months. Subsequent sanctions are for 12 and 24 months.

You can report your change online at www.socialsecurity.gov, or by calling toll free at 1-800-772-1213. If you're deaf or hearing-impaired call TTY 1-800-325-0778. Mail the information to your local Social Security office or in person if you prefer. If you receive SSI, you should ask about our options to use the automated toll-free [SSI Telephone Wage Reporting Service](#) or the free SSI Mobile Wage Reporting Smartphone app.

If you receive benefits and need to change your address or direct deposit, you can conveniently do so by creating a my Social Security account at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount.

Get the right check, in the right amount, at the right time, by reporting changes right away!

Medicare Physician Compare and Hospital Compare updated

Updates provide more for health care professionals and group practices

The popular websites Physician Compare and Hospital Compare have been updated and expanded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The agency says their goal is to improve these consumer online tools.



New quality measures have been added to [Physician Compare](#) for group practices and Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) and, for the first time, individual health care professionals. These measures focus on the quality of care provided by Medicare physicians and other health care professionals. [Hospital Compare](#) includes information on more than 100 quality measures and over 4,000 hospitals. The website has been refreshed and updated to include new data and several new measures.

“Consumers want trustworthy, reliable, and understandable information about the quality of health care delivered by providers,” said CMS Deputy Administrator and Chief Medical Officer Patrick Conway, M.D., MSc.

“Both Physician Compare and Hospital Compare show consumers that they have a choice. This large release of quality measures for hospitals and physicians empowers consumers with information to make more informed health care decisions, encourages health care professionals to strive for higher levels of quality, and drives overall health system improvement.”

The goal of Hospital Compare is to inform patients about hospital quality and to encourage care improvements on the hospital level. Hospital Compare allows patients and family members to simultaneously compare multiple hospitals on their performance related to heart attack, heart failure, pneumonia, surgery, and other conditions.

The 2014 data released today on [Physician Compare](#) ... [Read More](#)

For more information, please see the [fact sheet](#) on the Public Reporting of 2014 Quality Measures on the Physician Compare and Hospital Compare Websites.

How slow senior citizens walk increasingly found to predict Alzheimer's, death

Latest study finds walking speed in elderly may predict Alzheimer's

By Tucker Sutherland, editor, SeniorJournal.com



There is yet another study that declares that we may as well refer to a senior citizen that walks slowly as a “dead man walking,” the term describing a prisoner walking to his execution. This study says elderly who walk slowly are heading toward Alzheimer's disease, as a study last year did. Another study last year says slow walking seniors are less happy and have shorter longevity. Research in 2011 found walking gait especially accurate for predicting how long an old person will live.

So at least four recent research projects have concluded that senior citizen who walk slowly should not be making long-range plans.

The newest study finds the speed at which elderly people walk appears to be related to the amount of amyloid plaque they have built up in their brains, even if they don't yet have symptoms of Alzheimer's disease.

The study involved 128 people with an average age of 76 who did not have dementia but were considered at high risk for developing it, because they had some concerns about their memory. The participants had positron emission tomography (PET) scans of their brains to measure amyloid plaques in the brain.

These plaques consist of dense deposits of a protein called beta amyloid, and their progressive buildup in the brain has been associated with the development of Alzheimer's disease. Of the participants, 48 percent had a level of amyloid often associated with dementia.

Participants were also tested on thinking and memory skills and how well they could complete everyday activities. A total of 46 percent of the participants had mild cognitive impairment, which can be a precursor to the dementia that occurs in Alzheimer's disease....[Read More](#)

Positive thoughts about aging may fight off Alzheimer's disease

First time Alzheimer's linked to a cultural-based psychosocial risk factor

If you have more negative beliefs about aging, the more likely the volume in the hippocampus part of your brain will shrink, which is an indicator of Alzheimer's disease, report Yale researchers. The hippocampus is a part of the brain crucial to memory.

The study further suggests that combatting negative beliefs about aging, such as “elderly people are decrepit,” could potentially offer a way to reduce the rapidly rising rate of Alzheimer's disease, a devastating neurodegenerative disorder that causes dementia in more than 5 million Americans.

This newly published research led by the Yale School of Public Health demonstrates that individuals who hold negative beliefs about aging are more likely to have brain changes associated with Alzheimer's disease.

The study led by Becca Levy, associate professor of public health and of psychology, is the first to link the brain changes related to Alzheimer's disease to a cultural-based psychosocial risk factor. The findings were published online Dec. 7 in the journal *Psychology and Aging*.

“We believe it is the stress generated by the negative beliefs about aging that individuals sometimes internalize from society that can result in pathological brain changes,” said Levy.

“Although the findings are concerning, it is encouraging to realize that these negative beliefs about aging can be mitigated and positive beliefs about aging can be reinforced, so that the adverse impact is not inevitable.”

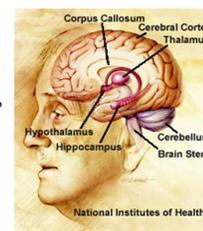
Study authors examined healthy, dementia-free subjects from the **Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging**, the nation's longest-running scientific study of aging. Based on MRIs, the researchers found that participants who held more negative beliefs about aging showed a greater decline in the volume of the hippocampus, a part of the brain crucial to memory. Reduced hippocampus volume is an indicator of Alzheimer's disease.

Then researchers used brain autopsies to examine two other indicators of Alzheimer's disease: amyloid plaques, which are protein clusters that build up between brain cells; and neurofibrillary tangles, which are twisted strands of protein that build up within brain cells.

Participants holding more negative beliefs about aging had a significantly greater number of plaques and tangles. The age stereotypes were measured an average of 28 years before the plaques and tangles.

In both stages of the study, Levy and her colleagues adjusted for other known risk factors for Alzheimer's disease, including health and age.

Other authors include biostatistician Martin Slade of the Yale School of Medicine, neurologist Juan Troncoso of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and a team of researchers from the Intramural Research Program of the National Institute on Aging (NIA), which included its scientific director Luigi Ferrucci, cognitive psychologist Alan Zonderman, and neuroscientist Susan Resnick. The study was made possible by grants from the NIA.



Making the holiday better for senior citizens with low vision

Top 10 tips and tricks making holidays more accessible for caretakers, too

The holidays can be wonderful, but the many activities surrounding this time of year can present some unique challenges for persons with low vision. Fortunately, by utilizing a few basic adaptive strategies and aids, anyone with low vision can enjoy all the opportunities this special season has to offer!

If you or someone you know has low vision, the Low Vision Focus @ Hadley is pleased to present its Top Ten Tips and Tricks for making the holidays fun and accessible:



- 1) If sending holiday greeting cards is one of your traditions, using a writing guide or template and a flair tipped pen can keep this activity easy and enjoyable.
- 2) Why not transfer a holiday contact list in an old address book to a new, large print version? This can be a terrific activity for a helpful grandchild.
- 3) Cooking is a time-honored pastime. If favorite recipes are becoming difficult to read, consider re-typing them in large, bold font and preserving them in a large print recipe book. You might also consider sliding each page into a plastic sleeve that can be wiped clean of spills. What a perfect gift for a friend or relative with low vision!
- 4) Speaking of cooking, when preparing a holiday meal, keep all pot handles turned toward the side of the stove. This will keep them out of the way and prevent unnecessary spills.
- 5) Lighting your home for the holidays is a fun and important part of the season. Make sure all extension cords are safely out of the way of foot traffic to prevent accidents.
- 6) When visiting friends and family, why not bring along a flashlight to illuminate dark walkways and entryways?
- 7) If company visits, ask them to remember to close cabinets, not to leave doors ajar, and to respect home organization.
- 8) Holiday shopping is a pleasure, but reading small labels on merchandise can be difficult. Bringing along a handheld magnifier can make the experience easier.
- 9) Going out to eat with friends is fun. Organizing your cash beforehand can reduce confusion when paying your bill. Keep denominations in separate compartments of your wallet or have a system of folding bills for identification.
- 10) Finally, we all know how busy schedules are this time of year. A large print calendar and a low vision or talking watch will keep you up to speed on all the activities!

So don't let low vision interfere with enjoyment of the season! The Low Vision Focus @ Hadley reports it is dedicated to assisting persons with low vision to live life to the fullest all year long.

For more information on how the Low Vision Focus, Hadley School for the Blind can help you or someone you know, visit www.lowvisionfocus.org, or call (855) 830-5355 to find out about our free programs and materials.

The New England ARA state affiliates are actively pursuing these Petitions.

Petition Subject: Observation Status: "Current Hospital Issues in the Medicare Program"

ADD
YOUR
NAME

**Get The Message Out:
SIGN THE PETITION!!!!**

Petition Subject: House Concurrent Resolution 37 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 12 to get power doors installed in Post Offices and other federal buildings.

ADD
YOUR
NAME

**Get The Message Out:
SIGN THE PETITION!!!!**

Petition Subject: Elimination of the Unfair GPO and WEP Provisions of the Social Security Act to make sure the Congress of the United States enacts legislation, HR.973 & S.1651

ADD
YOUR
NAME

**Get The Message Out:
SIGN THE PETITION!!!!**