

Departure of a very hard working N. E. ARA Staff person

On Friday, February 19, 2016, the ARA New England state presidents said goodbye to Jennifer Kenney, the New England Alliance for Retired Americans Field Organizer.

Jenny, or Jen, as she was known to us, was always there to help and guide our New England ARA organizations. She was vigorous in her support for senior citizens. Always on call for us seven days a week even if meant traveling to multiple states, sometimes in the same day, to attend Executive Board meeting, protesting injustices for retired and working people. When Presidential Candidates were in town, Jen was right there in their faces asking the hard questions on Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid. When the N. E. states had Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid events, Jen was the first one there, leaving her home in New Hampshire early in the morning or staying overnight, and the last to leave.

Jen will be profoundly missed by our members and the Alliance for Retired Americans she so passionately supported.

On behalf of the RI ARA and its member organizations, we wish Jen good health & happiness in her new role as Organizer for the IBEW in Florida.

FROM ALL OF US TO YOU JEN, THANK YOU!!!!

Millionaires Already Done Paying into Social Security for 2016



Joseph Peters, Jr.

According to the Center for Economic and Policy Research, Congress just gave a valentine to those making \$1,000,000 or more a year - by way of a tax break on earnings subject to the Social Security tax. Since the taxes that fund Social Security only apply to the first \$118,500 of wages in 2016, income above the cap is not subject to the tax. That means that the vast majority of the population - those making under \$118,500 a year - pay the 6.2 percent Social Security payroll tax for the entire year, but millionaires don't. It also means that millionaires have a lower effective tax rate.

Practically speaking, individuals making \$1,000,000 only had to pay into Social Security through February 13th. On the 14th of February— Valentine's Day — their income was no longer subject to the payroll tax, and millionaires' paychecks for the rest of the year will be heftier.

"As earnings become more concentrated to a small percentage of wealthier Americans, less money goes into the Social Security trust fund," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "We must scrap the cap so that millionaires pay their fair share."

This Week, Millionaires Stop Paying Into Social Security for the Rest of 2016



It's Time for the Wealthiest to Pay Their Fair Share. Scrap the Cap!

CMS, insurers agree on core clinical care quality measures

Agreement assures multi-payer agreement on quality measures



Agreement has been reached between the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP) to support a set of clinical quality measures that will, for the first time, facilitate multi-payer agreement on core measures of medical care.

The Core Quality Measures Collaborative of health care system participants, released seven sets of clinical quality measures. They will primarily support physician quality programs.

This work supports CMS's implementation of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA) through its measure development plan and required rulemaking. CMS says it is part of the commitment to ensuring programs work for providers while keeping the focus on improved quality of care for patients...**Read**

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Obamacare helped over 10 million using Medicare save over \$20 billion on drugs

39 million on Medicare used free preventive services in 2015



The Department of Health and Human Services this week released new information that shows that millions of seniors and people with disabilities with Medicare continue to save on prescription drugs and see improved benefits in 2015 as a result of the Affordable Care Act.

Nearly 10.7 million Medicare beneficiaries have received discounts over \$20.8 billion on prescription drugs – an average of \$1,945 per beneficiary – since the enactment of the Affordable Care Act.

In 2015 alone, nearly 5.2 million seniors and people with disabilities received discounts of over \$5.4 billion, for an average of \$1,054 per beneficiary. This is an increase in savings compared to 2014, when 5.1 million Medicare beneficiaries received discounts of \$4.8 billion, for an average of \$941 per beneficiary.

Medicare beneficiaries also continue to take advantage of certain recommended preventive services with no coinsurance:

An estimated 39.2 million people with Medicare (including those enrolled in Medicare Advantage) took advantage of at least one preventive service with no copays or deductibles in 2015, slightly more than in 2014.

Nearly 9 million Medicare beneficiaries (including those enrolled in Medicare Advantage) took advantage of an Annual Wellness Visit in 2015. Looking just at original Medicare, a million more people utilized an Annual Wellness Visit in 2015 than 2014 (more than 5.8 million compared to nearly 4.8 million).

"Medicare consumers are now more engaged and empowered in their own health thanks to the Affordable Care Act," said Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Acting Administrator Andy Slavitt. "Millions are now able to access more affordable prescription medicine for their chronic conditions and millions more are staying healthier by accessing preventive services, especially vital for people living with disabilities or growing older."...[Read More](#)

Wheels are turning to help communities provide seniors with life-saving transportation

Video tells the success story from Portland, Oregon

Many of us who are fervent about society helping meet the dire needs of senior citizens that are unable to help themselves, fail to realize the daily challenge of millions of seniors who need transportation to get to and from their dialysis treatment, their stroke rehab, or other life-saving services. There are some, however, that are very much aware and are making things happen to give new hope to these seniors.

Following is a blog by two people very much involved in helping communities make life better for their older residents. It is by Eric Weakly, program specialist with the Administration for Community Living, and Rik Opstelten, Program Manager with the Federal Transit Administration.



It focuses on the program in Portland, Oregon, that is serving dialysis patients, who have a very frequent need to be transported to their lengthy treatment....[Read More](#)

Massachusetts Dental Schools to Introduce Training On Opioid Abuse

Boston, Personal Health

BOSTON As he waits on the Legislature to compromise over opioid abuse prevention strategies, Gov. Charlie Baker on Thursday detailed an agreement reached with the deans of the state's three dental medicine schools to introduce training for opioid abuse prevention and management into their core curriculums.

The governor, who has reached similar agreements with the heads of the **state's medical schools** over improved training of future physicians to deal with pain management and substance abuse, continues to take steps on his own to chip away at the substance abuse crisis and the proliferation of addictive opioids.

Baker betrayed little frustration with the pace of action in the Legislature, despite calling it "critically important" for the House and Senate negotiators to deliver a bill to his desk.

"I know that they are trading proposals. I know that it's an active conversation that's going on, and my hope is that it will be able to land in a place that works for both the House and the Senate sooner rather than later. I would be more concerned about this if there wasn't any back and forth going on with respect to the issue, but there is," Baker said.

Baker met privately before holding a press conference with representatives from the Harvard, Tufts University and **Boston University Schools of Dental Medicine**, as well as Massachusetts Dental Society President-elect Raymond Martin, Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders and Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel....[Read More](#)

Decline in dementia cases found in new study



Rate of dementia decline.
[Click Here](#) to video

The media carries news almost daily about the explosion of dementia among senior citizens but a researchers of a new study have just announced they have detected a decline in the rate of new cases of dementia.

"Currently, there are no effective treatments to prevent or cure dementia; however, our study offers hope that some of the dementia cases might be preventable - or at least delayed - through primary (keep the disease process from starting) or secondary (keep it from progressing to clinically obvious dementia) prevention," explained corresponding author Sudha Seshadri, MD, professor of neurology at Boston University School of Medicine and FHS senior investigator.

These findings are based on data from the Framingham Heart Study (FHS) and appear in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

They provide hope that some cases of dementia might be preventable or delayed and encourages funding agencies and the scientific community to further explore demographic, lifestyle and environmental factors underlying this positive trend.

It is believed that the number of Americans with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias will grow each year as the size and proportion of the U.S. population age 65 and older continues to increase.

By 2025 the number of people age 65 and older with Alzheimer's disease is estimated to reach 7.1 million - a 40 percent increase from the 5.1 million aged 65 and older affected in 2015.

By 2050, the number of people in this age population with Alzheimer's disease may nearly triple, from 5.1 million to a projected 13.8 million, barring the development of medical breakthroughs to prevent or cure the disease...[More](#)

Stress appears to pave way to Alzheimer's for senior citizens

Strong evidence perceived stress increases chance older people will develop cognitive impairment

Feeling stressed out increases the likelihood that elderly people will develop mild cognitive impairment - often a prelude to full-blown Alzheimer's disease. Scientists find that highly stressed participants were more than twice as likely to become impaired than those who were not. Because stress is treatable, the results suggest that detecting and treating stress in older people might help delay or even prevent the onset of Alzheimers.

Each year, approximately 470,000 Americans are diagnosed with Alzheimer's dementia. Many of them first experience mild cognitive impairment - a pre-dementia condition that significantly increases the risk of developing Alzheimer's in the following months or years.

This study looked at the connection between chronic stress and "amnesic mild cognitive impairment" (aMCI), the most common type of MCI, which is primarily characterized by memory loss.

"Our study provides strong evidence that perceived stress increases the likelihood that an older person will develop aMCI," said Richard Lipton, M.D., senior author of the study, vice chair of neurology at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Montefiore Health System, and professor in the Saul R. Korey Department of Neurology and the Edwin S. Lowe Chair of Neurology at Einstein. "Fortunately, perceived stress is a modifiable risk factor for cognitive impairment, making it a potential target for treatment."

"Perceived stress reflects the daily hassles we all experience, as well as the way we appraise and cope with these events," said study first author, Mindy Katz, M.P.H., senior associate in the Saul R. Korey Department of Neurology at Einstein. "Perceived stress can be altered by mindfulness-based stress reduction, cognitive-behavioral therapies and stress-reducing drugs. These interventions may postpone or even prevent an individual's cognitive decline."

The researchers studied data collected from 507 people enrolled in the Einstein Aging Study (EAS), a community-based cohort of older adults. Since 1993, the EAS has systematically recruited adults 70 and over who live in Bronx County, NY. Participants undergo annual assessments that include clinical evaluations, a neuropsychological battery of tests, psychosocial measures, medical history, assessments of daily-living activities and reports (by participants and those close to them) of memory and other cognitive complaints....[Read More](#)



Risk of bleeding stroke much greater if high blood pressure untreated

Important to be aware of having high blood pressure in the first place - more below story



Left untreated, high blood pressure may significantly increase your risk of developing a brain bleed, according to research presented at the American Stroke Association's International Stroke Conference 2016. For senior citizens, women are more likely than men to have high blood pressure.

Intracerebral hemorrhage is a type of stroke caused by a weakened blood vessel that ruptures and bleeds into brain tissue. **High blood pressure** is a powerful determinant of risk for intracerebral hemorrhage.

Researchers examined six-years of data from 4,646 patients who were white, black or Hispanic. Half of them had an intracerebral hemorrhage.

They found:

- ◆ Compared to people without high blood pressure, untreated high blood pressure increased the odds of a brain bleed by 9.5 times in whites, 9.7 times in Hispanics, and 11.1 times in blacks.
- ◆ For people with high blood pressure, untreated high blood pressure was linked to a 3.7 to 5.5 higher odds of brain bleed compared to when it's treated.
- ◆ For patients with brain bleed and a previous diagnosis of high blood pressure, high blood pressure was more likely to not be treated in blacks (43.3 percent untreated) and Hispanics (48.3 percent) compared to whites (33.2 percent).
- ◆ Even when high blood pressure was treated, blacks still had a 75 percent higher odds and Hispanics had a 50 percent higher odds of brain bleed, compared to whites.

"The average age for a brain hemorrhage is much younger in minorities, especially in African-Americans, so they may suffer more disability earlier in life than others," said Kyle Walsh, M.D., study author and an assistant professor of Emergency Medicine at the University of Cincinnati in Ohio. ... [Read More](#)

Black senior citizens most likely ethnic group to develop dementia

Large study finds wider variance in dementia among senior citizen ethnic groups

Among those who reach age 65 dementia-free, 38% of blacks, 35% of American Indians/Alaskan Natives, 32% of Latinos, 30% of whites, 28% of Asian Americans and 25% of Pacific Islanders are projected to develop dementia in the next 25 years, according to researchers of a large study of ethnic disparities in dementia risk.

Researchers compared six ethnic and racial groups within the same geographic population and found significant variation in dementia incidence among them. The results are published online today in *Alzheimer's & Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association*.

This is the first study to look at dementia risk in a large population representing the diversity of the United States. Researchers found dementia incidence to be highest in blacks and American Indian/Alaska Natives, lowest among Asian Americans, and intermediate among Latinos, Pacific Islanders and whites... [Read More](#)



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

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

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

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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

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