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RI ARA

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*Affiliated with the Rhode Island AFL-CIO
RI ARA HealthLink Wellness*

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Social Security Disability Insurance Event Shines a Light on Program's Importance



Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) coverage, which workers earn through Social Security payroll tax contributions, provides benefits to 8.9 million disabled American workers and 1.9 million dependent children of disabled workers. On Tuesday, Sen. **Sherrod Brown** (D-OH) and Alliance Legislative Representative **Eva Dominguez** were featured speakers at an event hosted by the Center for American Progress focusing on the importance of SSDI. Sen. Brown spoke about the need to expand Social Security and the Republican strategy to use SSDI as a way to undermine support for the entire Social Security system. Ms. Dominguez shared stories, sent in by Alliance members, about how SSDI has been a crucial safety net for them.

For 80% of disabled workers, SSDI is the primary or only source of income, and it provides a drastic increase in the quality of life of recipients who might otherwise live in poverty. Only one-third of private-sector workers has employer-provided long-term disability insurance, and most of those plans often provide less than SSDI. Only 7% of workers who make \$12 per hour or less have such insurance, since most private long-term disability insurance plans are too costly for most workers. For more on SSDI from the AFL-CIO blog, along with a link to video of the event, [Read More](#).

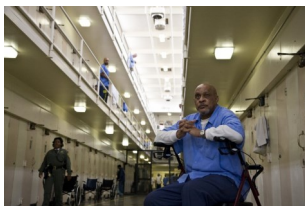
Growth in Medicare Spending Slows Dramatically

New estimates suggest that Medicare spending in 2014 is expected to be more than \$1,000 lower per beneficiary than was projected when the Affordable Care Act was passed in 2010. Current estimates, reported by the Kaiser Family Foundation, anticipate that the trend will continue. By 2019, per-beneficiary spending will be nearly \$2,400 lower than projected in 2010. While experts are unable to account fully for the decline, much of it appears to be tied to Medicare savings provisions of the Affordable Care Act, along with efficiency gains implemented by providers in response to incentives included in the health care law. Other possible contributors include the use of new data systems to more effectively track health spending and several popular brand name prescription drugs going off patent in recent years.



“These new estimates are more evidence that the Affordable Care Act is working to control costs and make health care more affordable for everyone, including seniors. Curbing the rise in health costs means lower Medicare premiums, an improved budget outlook, and healthier balance sheets for the Medicare trust fund,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director for the Alliance. To read more about the spending slowdown, go to <http://tinyurl.com/o3wo3uu>.

Graying Prison Population Means New Health Care Costs for States



A new survey suggests that a rapidly aging inmate population could lead to budget problems for the nation's prison system. According to the report from the Pew Charitable Trusts, the number of prison inmates 55 and older jumped 204% between 1999 and 2012, a period in which the under-55 inmate population increased by only 9%. The staggering uptick is the result of stiffer sentencing laws and an increase in the number of older felons. As a result of the nation's aging inmate population, prisons are being forced to shoulder higher health care costs and spend money to retrofit existing structures to accommodate the physical needs of older adults. More from American Public Media's Marketplace is at <http://tinyurl.com/nx8q5qq>.

“There is a high cost to denying parole to our oldest felons,” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “In cases where the threat to public safety remains high, and the prisoner is not rehabilitated, parole is not the answer. However, that is not always the case. That is why officials in many states are now reconsidering and trying to make it easier for these inmates to be released.”

Too Many Seniors Fail to Heed Warning of Exposure to Hot Summer Weather

National Institute on Aging provides advice about hyperthermia

that may save your life or someone you care for – elderly men the most in danger of death



Senior citizens, especially those with chronic medical conditions, should stay indoors, preferably with air conditioning, or at least a fan, on hot and humid summer days, warns the National Institute on Aging (NIA), which suggests specific actions seniors can take to avoid deadly hyperthermia. About 1,500 in the U.S. can be expected to die from heat-related problems this summer – mostly senior men.

Hyperthermia is an abnormally high body temperature caused by a failure of the heat-regulating mechanisms in the body to deal with the heat coming from the environment. Heat stroke, heat syncope (sudden dizziness after prolonged exposure to the heat), heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat fatigue are common forms of hyperthermia.

Seniors and even younger people can be at increased risk for these conditions, depending on the combination of outside temperature, their general health and individual lifestyle.

Living in housing without air conditioning, not drinking enough fluids, not understanding how to respond to the weather conditions, lack of mobility and access to transportation, overdressing and visiting overcrowded places are all lifestyle factors that can increase the risk for hyperthermia...[Read More](#)

Medicare Costs for Breast Cancer Screenings Skyrocket, But Do Patients Benefit?

While U.S. Preventive Services does not recommend breast cancer screening for senior women 75 and older, Medicare still spent an increasing amount on this age group

By Karen N. Peart, Yale University

Breast cancer screening costs for Medicare patients skyrocketed between 2001 and 2009, while the number of screening mammograms performed remained stable. What makes this even worse is that the increased cost did not lead to earlier detection of new breast cancer cases, says a new study by Yale School of Medicine researchers.

The study published in the July 1 *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* focused on the adoption of newer imaging technologies in the Medicare population, such as digital mammography.

Dr. Brigid Killelea, assistant professor of surgery, and Dr. Cary Gross, professor of internal medicine at Yale School of Medicine and director of the Cancer Outcomes, Public Policy, and Effectiveness Research (COPPER) Center at Yale Cancer Center, were lead authors of the study.

“Screening mammography is an important tool, but this rate of increase in cost is not sustainable,” said Killelea, assistant professor of surgery. “We need to establish screening guidelines for older women that utilize technology appropriately, and minimize unnecessary biopsies and over-diagnosis to keep costs under control.”...[Read More](#)



Seniors See Brains Age Faster the Less They Sleep

Faster brain ventricle enlargement marker for cognitive decline; first study to look at impact of less sleep



The less older people sleep, the faster their brains age, according a new study. The researchers see their discovery as opening the door for new studies on sleep loss and its contribution to cognitive decline in seniors, including dementia.

The Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore (Duke-NUS) researchers say previous research has examined the impact of sleep duration on cognitive functions in older adults. Though faster brain ventricle enlargement is known as a marker for cognitive decline and the development of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's, the effects of sleep on this marker have never been measured.

The Duke-NUS study examined the data of 66 older Chinese adults, from the Singapore-Longitudinal Aging Brain Study. Participants underwent structural MRI brain scans measuring brain volume and neuropsychological assessments testing cognitive function every two years. Additionally, their sleep duration was recorded through a questionnaire.

Those who slept fewer hours showed evidence of faster ventricle enlargement and decline in cognitive performance...[Read More](#)

Senior Women Less Successful Than Men at Reaching Diabetic Treatment Goals

Researcher wants gender-based treatment; failure of women to lower LDL cholesterol means more risk for cardiovascular death



A study of senior men and women with Type 2 diabetes, who were fighting to lower their cholesterol with statins, has found that women are much less likely to lower their bad cholesterol, or low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol. The research leader is calling for gender-based treatment to lower the risk of cardiovascular death in women.

With treatment, only 64 per cent of women lowered their LDL cholesterol to the recommended level compared with 81 per cent of men, the investigators reported.

“The findings suggest the need for gender-based evaluation and treatment of cardiovascular risk factors in these patients,” says Dr. Pendar Farahani.

“We need further study into the gender disparities to tailor drug interventions and we need to increase the inclusion of women in clinical trials.”

Dr. Farahani is an assistant professor in the Department of Medicine and Department of Public Health Sciences at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

This study demonstrated women with diabetes are more likely than men to have a LDL-C above treatment goals, according to the study. However, this pattern of gender gap was not observed for HgbA1c goal attainment. It did conclude that the concept of gender gap is useful for identifying at-risk groups for prevention and treatment efforts....[Read More](#)

HHS to Add 150 New Health Centers for High Need Communities Across U.S.

Affordable Care Act funds \$100 million to expand primary care in 2015 in health centers

An estimated 150 new health centers serving communities in need will be built across the country in 2015, thanks to a \$100 million in funding from the Affordable Care Act. The new health center sites will increase access to comprehensive, affordable, high quality primary health care services in the communities that need it most, according an announcement today by HHS Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell.

Later today, Secretary Burwell will also visit a Community Health Center in Decatur, Georgia to talk with its health care professionals about the important work they are doing to connect the community with high quality primary care.

“In communities across the country, Americans turn to their local Community Health Center for vital health care services that help them lead healthy, productive lives,” said Secretary Burwell. “That’s why it’s so important that the Affordable Care Act is supporting the expansion of health centers.”

The investment announced today will add to the more than 550 new health center sites that have opened in the last three years as a result of the Affordable Care Act.

Today, nearly 1,300 health centers and more than 9,200 service delivery sites that provide care to more than 21 million patients in every State, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Pacific Basin. They are managed by the Health Resources and Services Administration.

Health centers are also playing a critical role in helping the public learn about new coverage opportunities under the Affordable Care Act by conducting outreach and enrollment activities that link individuals to affordable coverage options available through the [Health Insurance Marketplace](#), according to .

“Since last fall, health centers have provided enrollment assistance to more than 4.7 million people across the country,” said HRSA Administrator Mary K. Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N.

“We are pleased that the Affordable Care Act is supporting the establishment of additional health center sites to provide expanded opportunities for the newly insured to receive care.”



**To learn more about the Affordable Care Act, visit www.HealthCare.gov.
To find a health center in your area, visit <http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov>.**

Six New Dietary Guidelines to Prevent Cancer Labeled Aggressive

Seniors warned warn about association between cancer and alcohol, red and processed meats, dairy products, and carcinogens in even well-cooked beef, poultry, and fish.



Six dietary guidelines, described as more aggressive than previous cancer prevention advice, have been released by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, a nonprofit health organization that promotes preventive medicine

These cancer prevention guidelines, emphasizing a diet rich in plant-based foods, such as soy beans and cruciferous, allium, and carotenoid vegetables, are based on the principle that diet changes are justified, even when evidence on certain issues are up for debate, according to the

group's news release.

Their recommendations, they say, urge the same kind of precautionary approach health experts took against tobacco decades earlier, before smoking bans were enforced, and warn about the association between cancer and alcohol, red and processed meats, dairy products, and carcinogens in well-cooked meats, including beef, poultry, and fish.

"The key recommendation is to build meals around fruits, vegetables, and legumes," says study author Neal Barnard, M.D., president of the nonprofit Physicians Committee and an adjunct associate professor of medicine at the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences.

"Plant-based foods provide an antioxidant boost and help promote a healthy weight, reducing the risk for all types of cancer in the long run."...[Read More](#)

Over 750 Hospitals Face Medicare Crackdown on Patient Injuries

The biggest impact may be on the nation's major teaching hospitals: 54 percent were marked for preliminary penalties; CDC estimates 75,000 died in 2011 from infections picked up in hospitals.

Dorothea Handron (pictured) was so weakened by complications from a hernia operation that she was placed in a medically induced coma at Vidant Medical Center (Photo by Jim R. Bounds/AP Images for KHN....[Read More](#)



Spanish Friday Alert now Available

The *Friday Alert* will now be available each week in Spanish! To see last week's *Alerta Semanal*, go to <http://tinyurl.com/mq7gpry>. For the Alliance's Spanish language page, which includes fact sheets and other translated documents from the main site, go to <http://tinyurl.com/nllcz6n>. More outreach from the Alliance to the Hispanic elder community will be coming in the next few months.

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

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

ADD YOUR NAME

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

Petition Subject: House Concurrent Resolution 67 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 26 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 3118 & S 896

ADD YOUR NAME

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