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RI ARA

*“Fighting for the future of our members.
NOW, more than ever!!!!”*

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



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Two Firefighters Die In Beacon Street Blaze



Two Boston firefighters died Wednesday while battling a wind-whipped blaze that tore through a Back Bay apartment building, causing a fiery explosion that sent people screaming into the streets and trapped the firefighters in the basement, where they desperately called for help as their water ran low.

Fanned by winds gusting up to 45 miles an hour, the nine-alarm fire blasted up from the basement of the four-story apartment building, triggering a powerful burst that ultimately took the lives of Lieutenant Edward J. Walsh Jr. and F Firefighter Michael R. Kennedy, despite frantic attempts to save them.

Authorities said the cause of the fire at 298 Beacon St. remained under investigation, but that the wind blowing off the Charles River caused it to rage out of control within minutes, engulfing the neighborhood in a thick cloud of black smoke.

“The fire escalated very quickly,” Deputy Fire Chief Joseph Finn said at a press briefing Wednesday night. “In 30 years, I’ve never seen a fire travel that fast, escalate that quickly, and cause such havoc.”

The fire, which broke out just before 3 p.m., was so dangerous that firefighters could not recover Walsh’s body until nearly 8 p.m.

Fire officials knew that Walsh remained in the building but could not get to him as the fire raged, Finn said, calling it a “tough call” but a necessary one.- [READ MORE](#)



How You Can Help in the Relief Efforts for Boston's Fallen Firefighters

The Boston Firefighters Credit Union has established a Lieutenant Walsh - Firefighter Kennedy Memorial Fund. Though they're working on enabling online credit card donations, they'll accept your charity the old fashioned way.

Be sure to mail your checks to:

Lieutenant Walsh - Firefighter Kennedy Memorial Fund

Boston Firefighters Credit Union

60 Hallet Street

Dorchester, MA 02124

Donations can also be made online at <https://www.bosfirecu.com/>



Rhode Island AFL-CIO joins with Rhode Island ACLU and Planned Parenthood of Southern New England to Oppose Proposed Constitutional Convention.

Joint Statement from George Nee, RI AFL-CIO President

We Must Protect Our Civil Rights • Our Constitution Is Not For Sale

We Already Have Effective Means of Changing Governance

Our Money is Better Spent Elsewhere

CMS Rules Would Help Protect Seniors When Medicare Advantage Plans Drop Doctors

**Proposals follow UnitedHealthcare's decision to drop thousands of doctors
from its Medicare Advantage plans**

By Susan Jaffe, KHN

This KHN story was produced in collaboration with The Washington Post



Federal officials are considering new Medicare Advantage rules to help protect seniors when insurers make significant reductions to their networks of doctors and other health care providers. The proposals follow UnitedHealthcare's decision to drop thousands of doctors from its Medicare Advantage plans in at least 10 states last fall.

The government's response is part of the 148-page announcement of proposed rules and payment rates for next year's Medicare Advantage plans released last month by the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Officials say that the terminations only a few weeks before Medicare's Dec. 7 enrollment deadline may not have given seniors enough time to find new doctors, choose a different plan or rejoin traditional Medicare, which does not restrict beneficiaries

to a limited network of providers....[Read More](#)

New evidence that Medicare Advantage is an insurance industry scam

A big part of the argument made by enemies of the Affordable Care Act that the Act is hurting Medicare applies to a category of health plan known as Medicare Advantage. New evidence has just come in showing that Medicare Advantage is a ripoff that fattens the health insurance industry while scarcely helping its enrollees, all at public expense.

Medicare Advantage plans differ from traditional Medicare by offering its enrollees ostensibly better care and sometimes broader services--free eyeglasses, even gym memberships--in return for reimbursements from the government that are 14% higher than traditional Medicare reimbursements, or more. And yes, the Affordable Care Act aims to pare the government's reimbursements for Advantage plans by a total of about \$200 billion over 10 years.

These plans cover more than 15 million seniors, or about 30% of all Medicare members, so it's unsurprising that Republicans are playing the cuts for all they're worth. "Democrats are about to awake and provoke a political giant -- senior citizens," wrote a spokesman for the National Republican Senatorial Committee in February. (Several Democratic senators up for reelection obligingly, and cravenly, called for this year's Advantage reimbursement cuts to be suspended.)

Critics have long argued that the extra reimbursements for Advantage plans are a waste of money, just a handout to the insurance industry. A new paper by three Wharton School economists gives the critics powerful new ammunition....[Read More](#)



NCPA Suggests Hearing on Harm to Community Pharmacies, Patients from 'Preferred Pharmacy' Medicare Drug Plans

Pharmacy Choice, March 25, 2014



In a press release, The National Community Pharmacists Association said that the Senate and House Small Business Committees should hold a hearing looking into the unintended consequences for patients and independent community pharmacies that have resulted from Medicare Part D "preferred pharmacy" prescription drug plans. The Alliance is mentioned as being in favor of patient choice.

In early 2014, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) proposed allowing any pharmacy willing to accept the requisite contractual terms and conditions to participate as a drug plan's "preferred" pharmacy. This patient choice proposal received support from dozens of members of Congress from both parties [including House Small Business Committee Chair Sam Graves (R-Mo.)] and key Medicare beneficiary advocates, but was set aside by CMS March 10 largely as a result of political opposition to other, unrelated provisions contained in the agency's broader proposed rule....[Read More](#)

HealthLink Wellness

Diabetes Drug Shows Promise in Reducing Alzheimer's, Restoring Memory in Test Mice

Potential as a test for diagnosis of AD and a therapy for the disease; improved learning and memory in tests



Diabetic patients taking the drug, pramlintide, may be ahead of many of us in the battle against Alzheimer's disease (AD) and preserving our memory. A new study found the synthetic version of amylin reduces amyloid-beta peptides, a major component of Alzheimer's in the brain. It also improves learning and memory, according to researchers from Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM).

Their findings, which appear online in *Molecular Psychiatry*, also found AD patients have a lower level of amylin in blood compared to those without this disease. These results may provide a new avenue for both treatment and diagnosis of AD.

AD is a degenerative brain disease associated with severe functional decline and has no effective treatment. Currently there are 5 million people with Alzheimer's disease in the U.S. alone, and the cost of caring for these patients exceeds \$100 billion per year. If no effective treatments are developed, the number of Alzheimer's patients is expected to grow to 14-16 million by the year 2050...[Read More](#)

Latest Potential for Early Detection of Alzheimer's Disease Analyzes Spinal Fluid

Other recent claims of success with early detection of Alzheimer's have used blood test or eye abnormalities in lab rats

Researchers announced this week they are close to being able to diagnose the early stages of Alzheimer's disease by the detection of tiny, misfolded protein fragments in cerebrospinal fluid taken from patients. Just in a matter of days similar claims for early discovery of the disease has been made by scientists using a [blood test](#) and others studying [eye abnormalities](#) in lab rats.

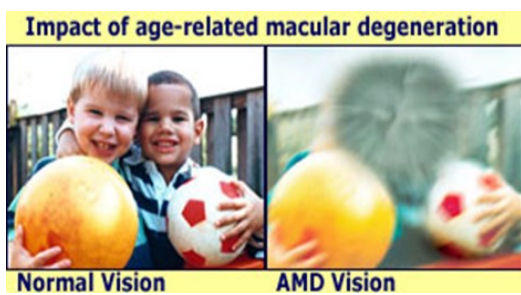


Scientists, with hefty financing from drug-makers, government and non-profits, have been burning the midnight oil in efforts to find a means of detecting Alzheimer's disease at its very early stages, while treatments might have a better chance of working before extensive brain damage and dementia develop. Nothing, however, seems close to clearing all the hurdles necessary to become available for clinical use with humans.

These misfolded protein fragments have been suggested to be the main culprit in Alzheimer's disease, according to the report on this research in the Cell Press journal *Cell Reports*. The authors point out, too, that scientists used to think amyloid plaques were the problem in Alzheimer's disease...[Read More](#)

Macular Degeneration Now Leading Cause of Blindness in Rich Nations; Poor Vision Drops

Macular degeneration has become leading cause of blindness in rich countries as rates of blindness in developed world improve dramatically in 20 years



Rates of blindness and impaired eyesight have plummeted over the past 20 years in the developed world. But the bad news – especially for senior citizens and women – is that macular degeneration has replaced cataract as the leading cause of blindness in wealthy countries, where women were more likely to be blind or to have poor vision than men in all years studied.

The researchers trawled through the available evidence from 1980 to 2012 on the prevalence and causes of blindness and partial sightedness/ impaired vision in high income countries - Asia Pacific; Australasia; North America; and Western Europe - and Central and Eastern Europe.

They found 243 suitable studies out of a total of 15,000 worldwide that were representative of many populations, according to a report published online in the *British Journal of Ophthalmology*...[Read More](#)

Most Seniors Who Break Bones in Falls Not Tested, Treated for Cause

Half of all women and one-quarter of all men will suffer at least one fragility fracture after age 50



Older people who break a bone in a fall from no greater than their standing height - called a "fragility fracture" - are two to five times more likely to suffer another than someone who has not suffered such a break. And it appears to be progressive - if they suffer a second fracture the odds of a third are even higher. Surprisingly, most of these seniors are not tested or treated for what causes most of these fractures.

The underlying cause for the vast majority of these non-traumatic fractures is osteoporosis, a progressive disease that decreases the weight and density of bones, making them more brittle. Osteoporosis doesn't have any obvious symptoms so in most cases it isn't noticed until a fracture occurs - and those fractures are anything but rare.

According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF), approximately half of all women and one-quarter of all men will suffer at least one fragility fracture after age 50...[Read More](#)

New Cancer Drug ZL105 Ten Times More Effective Fighting Some Cancers: Game-Changer

May be ten times more effective in treating ovarian, colon, melanoma, renal, and some breast cancers

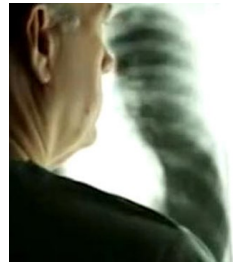
A game-changer in the battle against cancer may just be a new drug called ZL105, which researchers say can manipulate the body's natural signalling and energy systems, allowing the body to attack and shut down cancerous cells. They foresee a revolution in cancer treatment that may lead to a dramatic improvement in cancer survival rates.

Preliminary data indicate that the novel drug may be ten times more effective in treating ovarian, colon, melanoma, renal, and some breast cancers, according to data obtained by the U.S. National Cancer Institute.

ZL105 is a compound based on the precious metal iridium, according to the study from the University of Warwick, Coventry, U.K., which is published in the journal *Angewandte Chemie International Edition*.

The study has found ZL105 could potentially replace currently used anticancer drugs, which become less effective over time, cause a wide-range of side-effects and damage healthy cells as well as cancerous.

These misfolded protein fragments have been suggested to be the main culprit in Alzheimer's disease, according to the report on this research in the Cell Press journal *Cell Reports*. The authors point out, too, that scientists used to think amyloid plaques were the problem in Alzheimer's disease...[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.

House Concurrent Resolution 67 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 26 to get power doors installed in Post Offices and other federal buildings.

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

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

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

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