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Affiliated with the Rhode Island AFL-CIO

RI ARA HealthLink Wellness

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Impending Social Security & Medicare Crisis

Rubio's Plans to Dismantle Social Security, Medicare Intensify Retirement *Advice to Rubio:* “Respect Your Elders,” That Includes Social Security & Medicare



Sen. Marco Rubio

On Tuesday, May 12, 2014, Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) insulted the American people by proposing that their most successful earned benefits program, Social Security, should be dismantled. Rubio’s plans to raise the retirement age and to privatize Social Security and Medicare would increase wealth inequality, transferring the only guarantees that most Americans have for a secure retirement to Wall Street bankers and insurance companies.

Rubio alleges his proposal to raise would “account for the rise in life expectancy.” His Wall Street friends may be living longer, but life expectancy is powerfully tied to socioeconomic status; raising the retirement age harms minorities and low-wage workers – people who rely on Social Security in great part for their retirement income and contribute steadily through their working years.

Our Social Security system is the foundation of our retirement security and a basic protection for American families in the face of disability or death. Each generation has done its part to maintain its foundation for nearly 80 years, about twice Rubio’s age. Our Social Security system has been meticulously built to deal with population fluctuations of the baby boomers and beyond. Rubio’s calls to dismantle this fundamental program are, unfortunately, for the benefit of his Wall Street friends.

Richard Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans said, "If Senator Rubio really cared about strengthening retirement security, he would join the effort to expand Social Security benefits as Sen. Tom Harkin and Rep. Linda Sanchez have proposed. If he really cared about addressing the retirement security crisis, and there is one, he would get on board with raising the minimum wage. Social Security benefits are based on wages. By calling Social Security ‘outdated,’ Senator Rubio shows how out of touch he is with the needs of current and future retirees.”

Tony Fransetta, President of the Florida Alliance for Retired Americans said, “Senator Rubio is once again politically posturing himself while ignoring the real needs of Florida retirees and working families. I am insulted that he is pitting older generations against younger ones and trying to convince my grandkids to settle for less than what they deserve, which is a secure retirement that they earn through their work.”

Rubio holds a 7% lifetime score in Congress according to the [Alliance for Retired Americans Congressional Voting Record for 2013](#).



Rep. Ryan & Sen. Rubio

**What do these two Tea Party members,
Congressman Paul Ryan, Senator Marco Rubio &
The Koch Brothers have in common?**

Abolish

**The AFFORDABLE CARE ACT,
Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid
& Protect the 1%**



Koch Brothers

CMS moves to improve Medicare quality of care

By Ferdous Al-Faruque



The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has tapped two contractors to oversee a top program aimed at improving the quality of care for Medicare recipients.

The agency said it has hired Maryland-based Livanta and Ohio-based KePRO to oversee its Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) program.

The program enlists private companies to review medical care, improve services and help Medicare beneficiaries with complaints. It is intended to keep down costs, while providing a national network of providers who can improve healthcare services.

The CMS said in a statement that its move highlighted a commitment “to restructure the QIO Program to gain efficiencies, to eliminate any perceived conflicts of interest, and to better address the needs of Medicare beneficiaries.”

A 2006 report by the Institute of Medicine called for a “major restructuring” of the program, finding mismanaged resources and potential conflicts of interest with health care providers.

“One of the most critical roles of CMS is to protect the quality and safety of care delivered to beneficiaries,” said deputy administrator for innovation and quality and CMS chief medical officer Dr. Patrick Conway. “Care needs to be patient-centered and directly engage patients, families, and caregivers.”

According to the agency the contractors will review reports from QIO participants on the standard of care being delivered to Medicare beneficiaries.

The second phase of the QIO overhaul is expected to begin in July when the CMS will award contracts to companies to work directly with providers and communities to improve care.

Frequently asked questions about Medicare

State officials help those 65 and older get the most out of their Medicare benefits

By Meredith Cohn, *The Baltimore Sun*



Since 1966, residents 65 or older have been able to sign up for Medicare, the federal government's health plan for seniors. But there are now private plans available, as well as a drug plan, giving people more options — but also raising more questions for beneficiaries.

Michelle P. Holzer, program manager for the Maryland Department of Aging's State Health Insurance Assistance Program, offers answers to some of the most common questions people have about the program. The office offers free and confidential counseling and assistance in every county...[Read More](#)



Physician found to overuse ‘low-value’ Medicare services

By: JUDY PACKER-TURSMAN, *Clinical Endocrinology News Digital Network*

Clinicians seem to be overusing "low-value" medical services that provide little or no benefit to Medicare beneficiaries, according to a report published online May 12 in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

In the study, Harvard researchers developed 26 claims-based measures drawn from evidence-based lists of services providing minimal clinical benefit. Categories included low-value cancer screening, diagnostic and preventive testing, imaging, and surgical procedures. In all, the study tracked more than 1.3 million Medicare beneficiaries' claims from 2009, analyzing the proportion of them receiving such services, mean-per-beneficiary service use, and the proportion of total spending devoted to the services.

Among the study's 26 designated measures of low-value services: cervical cancer screening for women 65 years and older, computed tomography scanning of the sinuses for uncomplicated acute rhinosinusitis, head imaging for uncomplicated headache, preoperative cardiac stress testing, and back imaging for patients with nonspecific low back pain. Researchers tweaked measures by age, symptoms, and site of care, creating different levels of sensitivity for each measure (i.e., a more sensitive, less specific baseline definition, along with a less sensitive, more specific definition with additional restrictions)....[Read More](#)



RIARA HealthLink Wellness

Should You Take Daily Aspirin? Simple Test May Provide Scientific Answer

Study shows test may help doctors better determine who will and will not benefit from use of aspirin therapy to prevent heart disease.



For years seniors, and even some younger adults, have wrestled with the question of whether they should take a daily aspirin. We know it offers cardiovascular protection, but there is also the danger of excessive bleeding. There is even room for wiggle in the American Heart Association's recommendations. At last, there may be a better option – a simple test providing scientific evidence to help doctors in deciding their aspirin advice for patients.

For over 30 years, aspirin has been known to prevent heart attacks and strokes, but who exactly should take a daily aspirin has remained debatable. New research published in *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes* shows that your coronary artery calcium (CAC) score, a measurement of plaque in the arteries that feed the heart, may help determine whether or not you are a good candidate for aspirin.

“Many heart attacks and strokes occur in individuals who do not appear to be at high risk,” states lead author, Michael D Miedema, MD, MPH., preventative cardiologist at the Minneapolis Heart Institute at Abbott Northwestern Hospital and a clinical investigator with the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation (MHIF)...[Read More](#)

Elderly Men with High Blood Pressure Lower Death Risk with Just Moderate Exercise

Fittest of the senior men were half as likely to die as the least fit; fitness has positive impact on health regardless of age or chronic illness.

Elderly men – age 70 and older - with high blood pressure can lower their risk of death with even moderate levels of fitness, according to new research in the American Heart Association's journal *Hypertension*.

“This level of fitness is achievable by most elderly individuals engaging in a brisk walk of 20 to 40 minutes, most days of the week,” said Charles Faselis, M.D., lead author of the study and chief and professor of medicine at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

For the study, researchers assessed the fitness status of 2,153 men, aged 70 years and older with high blood pressure by a standard treadmill exercise test.

Researchers applied the international units used to measure fitness, called metabolic equivalents (METs), to determine the men's peak fitness levels. A MET is equal to the amount of oxygen the body uses per kilogram of body weight per minute. One MET is the amount of energy expended at rest; anything above that represents work...[Read More](#)



7 Heart Healthy Shopping Tips for Seniors

One of the best ways to prevent or control cardiovascular disease is by eating a healthy diet. Use A Place for Mom's heart healthy shopping list for seniors and incorporate these nutrition tips into your loved one's diet for greater senior heart health.

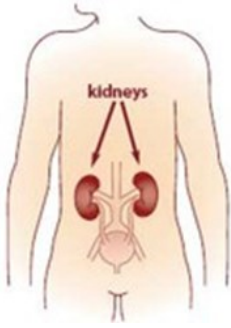


Heart-healthy seniors, heart-healthy tips for seniors, senior heart health, senior nutrition from the American Heart Association.

There's no better time to do a “gut check” on the foods your loved ones are eating and whether they're heart healthy. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the U.S., reports the Center for Disease Control, and about 715,000 Americans have a heart attack each year, so it pays to be aware of what you can do at home to promote a heart-healthy diet for your family. The good news is, our cardiovascular health is largely under our control. Eating a diet rich in fruits, veggies, lean protein, and fiber—and, of course, low in greasy fast food—can considerably reduce the risk of heart disease....[Read More](#)

Seniors and Kidney Disease:

What is Kidney Disease? What do the Kidneys Do?



You have two kidneys. They are bean-shaped and about the size of a fist. They are located in the middle of your back, on the left and right of your spine, just below your rib cage. The kidneys filter your blood, removing wastes and extra water to make urine. They also help control blood pressure and make hormones that your body needs to stay healthy. When the kidneys are damaged, wastes can build up in the body.

Kidney Function and Aging

Kidney function may be reduced with aging. As the kidneys age, the number of filtering units in the kidney may decrease, the overall amount of kidney tissue may decrease, and the blood vessels that supply the kidney may harden, causing the kidneys to filter blood more slowly.

How Kidney Disease Occurs

Kidney disease means the kidneys are damaged and can no longer remove wastes and extra water from the blood as they should. Kidney disease is most often caused by diabetes or high blood pressure. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 20 million Americans may have kidney disease.. Many more are at risk. The main risk factors for developing kidney disease are

- **diabetes**
- **high blood pressure**
- **cardiovascular (heart and blood vessel) disease a family history of kidney failure**

Each kidney contains about one million tiny filtering units made up of blood vessels. These filters are called glomeruli. Diabetes and high blood pressure damage these blood vessels, so the kidneys are not able to filter the blood as well as they used to. Usually this damage happens slowly, over many years. This is called chronic kidney disease. As more and more filtering units are damaged, the kidneys eventually are unable to maintain health.

Early kidney disease usually has no symptoms, which means you can't feel if you have it. Blood and urine tests are the only way to check for kidney damage or measure kidney function. If you have diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, or a family history of kidney failure, you should be tested for kidney disease.

Kidney Failure

Kidney disease can get worse over time, and may lead to kidney failure. Kidney failure means very advanced kidney damage with less than 15% normal function. End-stage renal disease (ESRD) is kidney failure treated by dialysis or kidney transplant.

If the kidneys fail, treatment options such as dialysis or a kidney transplant can help replace kidney function. Some patients choose not to treat kidney failure with dialysis or a transplant. If your kidneys fail, talk with your health care provider about choosing a treatment that is right for you.

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!!!!