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# RI ARA

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

*Affiliated with the Rhode Island AFL-CIO*



Publication 2014 / Issue 45  
Published in house by the  
RI ARA

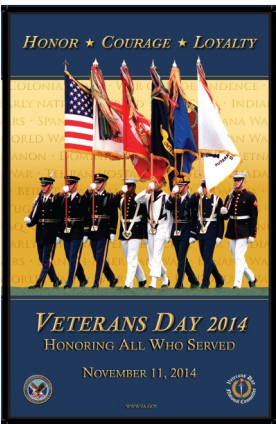
## November 10, 2014 E-Newsletter

### New Leadership in U.S. Senate Likely Poses an Increased Threat to Seniors

Seniors will once again have to be concerned with the possibility of a grand bargain on Social Security and Medicare. The Republicans could force Senate Democrats to either filibuster a reform bill from their own president or betray their own principles and the promises they made their constituents (<http://tinyurl.com/nxrf2k3>). Senior Republicans are also discussing a fast-track procedure known as “reconciliation,” which would permit them to push a measure through the Senate with just 51 votes. Among the targets under consideration are cuts to Medicare benefits and tax reform. In addition, likely new Senate Majority Leader **Mitch McConnell** (R-KY) and House Speaker **John Boehner** (R-OH) are hoping to dismantle the Affordable Care Act (<http://tinyurl.com/l3177n8>).

“The Alliance for Retired Americans is ready to have a busy, defensive first three to four months of 2015,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance.

On Wednesday, November 12, 2014, the Rhode Island Alliance for Retired Americans will host the Alliance for Retired Americans New England Regional Presidents meeting in the AFSCME Council 94 Union Hall. Among the topics will be “What the Midterm Elections will mean for our members” with Eva Domingues, ARA Legislative Representative. The Connecticut ARA will have a Power Point Presentation on the GOP/WEP and other topics. Also attending will be representatives from the RI Congressional Delegation.



### Happy Veterans Day

#### Presidential Proclamation -- Veterans Day, 2014

Since the birth of our Nation, American patriots have stepped forward to serve our country and defend our way of life. With honor and distinction, generations of servicemen and women have taken up arms to win our independence, preserve our Union, and secure our freedom. From the Minutemen to our Post-9/11 Generation, these heroes have put their lives on the line so that we might live in a world that is safer, freer, and more just, and we owe them a profound debt of gratitude. On Veterans Day, we salute the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen who have rendered the highest service any American can offer, and we rededicate ourselves to fulfilling our commitment to all those who serve in our name.

[Read the full Presidential Proclamation](#)

### Retirement Estimator at Social Security is Answer Again in Q&A



There are several important tools provided online by the Social Security Administration that can help senior citizens, and even those who have not reached their retirement age, in better planning their retirement. Maybe the most useful is the Retirement Estimator, which is the answer again, this time to a question in this week's Social Security Q&A about deciding when to retire...[Read More](#)

#### Links

[Social Security Web Site](#)

[Retirement Estimator](#)

[Retirement Information for Medicare Beneficiaries](#)

[Information for Wounded Veterans](#)

[Social Security Disability Claim Process](#)

## Advanced Dementia Patients Given Medications of Questionable Benefit, High Cost

**Questionably medications account for more than one third of their medication expenditures**



A nationwide study of 5046 patients with advanced dementia – mostly white females and more than half age 85 or older – has found that most nursing home residents with advanced dementia receive medications with questionable benefit that incur substantial associated costs.

“For such residents, questionably beneficial medications account for more than one third of their medication expenditures,” wrote the authors of the study to be published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, November 3, 2014.

The researcher note that “Lower use of questionably beneficial medications was found among residents with advance directives who were enrolled in the hospice setting.”

Advanced dementia in this study was defined as a terminal illness characterized by no longer recognizing family, bedridden and able to speak fewer than five words. Generally, they had frequent problems with dysphagia and aspiration but received an average of five to 15 medications daily.

Standards of care require patients’ goals of care should guide the prescribing of medication during such terminal illness. Medications that do not promote the primary goal of care should be minimized.

The goal of the researchers, according to lead author Jennifer Tjia, MD, MSCE, Department of Quantitative Health Sciences, University of Massachusetts Medical School, was to estimate the prevalence of medications with questionable benefit used by nursing home residents with advanced dementia, identify resident- and facility-level characteristics associated with such use, and estimate associated medication expenditures...[Read More](#)

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## Elderly Men Reporting Sleep Problems at Higher Risk for Alzheimer's Disease

**The later age the self-reported sleep disturbance was found the higher the risk was for developing Alzheimer's disease**

In a new study, researchers from Uppsala University demonstrate that elderly men with self-reported sleep disturbances run a higher risk of developing Alzheimer's disease than men without self-reported sleep disturbances. The results are published in the scientific journal *Alzheimer's & Dementia*.



The researchers followed more than 1,000 men, who were initially 50 year old, between the years 1970 and 2010. The results of the study show that self-reported sleep disturbances were linked to an increased risk for Alzheimer's disease during the 40-year follow-up period, particularly if they occurred late in life. The data suggest that a regular good night's sleep could support brain health in men.

"We demonstrate that men with self-reported sleep disturbances run a 1.5-fold higher risk to develop Alzheimer's disease than those without reports of sleep disturbances during a 40-year follow-up period," says Christian Benedict, sleep researcher at Uppsala University, who led the study.

"The later the self-reported sleep disturbance was found the higher the risk was for developing Alzheimer's disease. These findings suggest that strategies aimed at improving sleep quality in late life may help reduce the risk to develop Alzheimer's disease."

Benedict adds, "Importantly, there are several lifestyle factors, such as exercise, that can influence your brain's health. Thus, it must be borne in mind that a multifaceted lifestyle approach comprising good sleep habits is essential for maintaining brain health as you age."



## Discovery Opens Door for Possible Treatment of a Common Dementia

### Damage to white matter in brain may be due to many unnoticed strokes



Brain scans find white matter damage in about half of all senior citizens, which is often harmless, but when the damage is severe, it can cause mental impairment. This has, however, been considered a natural part of aging. Now, researchers think this white matter disease (leukoaraiosis) may actually be the result of many tiny unnoticed strokes accumulating over time – a finding they say points to a potentially treatable form of dementia.

Researchers at the Krembil Neuroscience Centre, Toronto, say that in this type of dementia, there is damage to the white matter (nerve fibers) of the brain apparent on computerized tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans of older individuals.

Previous studies have already established that the more white matter disease there is in the brain, the more likely patients are to have symptoms of dementia such as cognitive impairment or changes in behavior. What was not understood is why this white matter disease develops – the traditional assumption was that it might be the result of the natural aging process.

The research was published today in the journal *Annals of Neurology*.

The researchers conducted an intensive study to observe the development of this white matter disease over a short period of time, rather than on an annual basis – the interval at which previous studies have performed repeat brain imaging. The study involved 5 patients with white matter disease undergoing detailed MRI scanning of their brains every week for 16 consecutive weeks.

The weekly MRI scans revealed new tiny spots arising in the brain's white matter that were, based on their MRI appearance, characteristic of small new strokes (cerebral infarcts). The lesions had no symptoms but, with time, came to resemble the existing white matter disease in the subjects' brains...[Read More](#)

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## Seniors with Heart Problems Need to Worry About NOT Getting Flu Shot

### Those with cardiovascular problems probably most in need of a flu shot

*By Tucker Sutherland, editor, SeniorJournal.com*

When you have heart problems, as so many senior citizens do, it is natural to become concerned about things you put in your body – like vaccine to prevent flu. In this case, don't worry, the Centers for Disease Control says what you should be worried about is catching the flu – that does increase the risk of a heart attack. There are even studies that say the flu shot may offer protection against heart attacks.



Having heart disease puts you at risk for serious health complications if you get the flu. Flu season is now here! It is important that those at risk for complications from the flu get vaccinated, even this late in the flu season.

The Mayo Clinic is even more adamant with a page other website - [\*\*Flu shots: Especially important if you have heart disease.\*\*](#)

“If you have heart disease, flu season can be a dangerous time. Death from influenza (flu) is more common among people with heart disease than among people with any other chronic condition. Fortunately, getting a flu shot can reduce your risk of catching the flu or developing complications from the flu,” say the Mayo Clinic doctors.

“Doctors have long recommended that older adults and other high-risk groups get flu shots, but they now emphasize the importance of flu shots for those with heart disease. The flu shot could prevent thousands of flu-related complications and deaths every year in people who have heart disease.”

The real clincher, however, is a [report](#) in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 2013 that found the flu shot appears to actually prevent heart attacks.

“The use of influenza vaccine was associated with a lower risk of major adverse cardiovascular events. The greatest treatment effect was seen among the highest-risk patients with more active coronary disease,” concluded the researchers who reviewed many research reports...[Read More](#)

- [Find a place to get the flu vaccine in your area.](#)
- [Learn more about the Million Hearts initiative to prevent heart attack and stroke.](#)

# Prostate Cancer, Kidney Disease Detected on Spot by Innovative Device

Study looked at prostate cancer and kidney disease,  
same method could be a diagnostic tool for other diseases



When you flush the toilet, you may be discarding microscopic warning signs about your health. But a cunningly simple new device can stop that vital information from “going to waste.” It can detect markers of kidney disease and prostate cancer in a few minutes.

All you have to do is drop a sample into a tiny tube and see how far it goes, according to Brigham Young University chemist Adam Woolley, who made the device with the help of his students.

That’s because the tube is lined with DNA sequences that will latch onto disease markers and nothing else. Urine from someone with a clean bill of health would flow freely through the tube - the farther, the better. But even at ultra-low concentrations, the DNA grabs enough markers to slow the flow and signal the presence of disease.

“In a disease state, this particular marker is equal to about one billionth of a percent of the content of urine.” Woolley said. “We can detect close to those levels. If we can get below that, it would give us better sensitivity for somebody at an early stage of the disease.”

Grad students Debolina Chatterjee and Danielle Mansfield co-authored the study for the journal Analytical Methods using synthetic urine samples. The next step is to do human trials with this “lab on a chip.”

The method holds several advantages over current tests for prostate cancer: No blood draws, instant results and potentially higher accuracy.

Men who get their blood screened for a prostate specific antigen are really only learning whether their prostate is enlarged, and sometimes cancer is the cause.

But the BYU device works only when there is an exact match to a disease marker that is 22 RNA bases long. Harmless material that closely resembles the disease marker doesn’t sound a false alarm.

“The flow distance is about 20 to 40 millimeters longer if just one of those 22 letters is wrong,” Woolley said.

Although the new study specifically looked at prostate cancer and kidney disease, this same method could be used to make a diagnostic tool for other diseases.

“In a urine sample there can be millions of different sequences of micro-RNA and what we need to do is find the ones related to a disease,” Woolley said.

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## 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.

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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!!!!**