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RI ARA

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

Affiliated with the Rhode Island AFL-CIO



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New England ARA Regional Presidents Meeting

On Wednesday, November 12, 2014, the RI ARA hosted a New England Regional ARA Presidents Meeting in the AFSCME Council 94 Union Hall, North Providence.

The meeting was called to order at 10 am. Attending the meeting were Bette Marafino, Connecticut ARA President, Carlos Visinho, Massachusetts ARA President, Lucy Edwards, New Hampshire ARA President, John A. Pernorio, RI ARA President and Jane Osgatharp, Vermont ARA President. Also in attendance were Jennifer Kenny, ARA New England Senior Field Organizer, Dr. Joseph Boffa, ARA Community Advocacy Network Board Member, Erin Donovan, from Senator Reed, Vivian Spencer, from Senator Whitehouse, Nancy Beattie, from Congressman Langevin, Rita Murphy from Congressman Cicilline, and Mark Mancinho, RI AFL-CIO Legislative Representative. Eva Dominguez, Alliance for Retired Americans Legislative Representative was scheduled to attend however her flight from Washington was delayed twice because of the fog and then canceled.

The theme of the meeting was **"How the Midterm Elections would impact our members"**. With the Republicans now controlling both chambers of Congress and stating that they would cut Social Security Benefits or privatize it, cut Medicare, turning it into a voucher system that shifts health care costs onto retirees, most of whom cannot afford the changes and wouldn't get the health care they need, Medicaid, and the dismantling the Affordable Care Act, which would greatly impact Medicare Part D's Donut Hole.

Also on the Agenda was the **Elimination of the Unfair GPO and WEP Provisions of the Social Security Act**. The Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) penalize people who have dedicated their lives to public service, including many teachers, firefighters and police officers, by taking away benefits they, or their spouses, have EARNED. At the ARA Convention, the New England State submitted a Resolution urging ALL state ARA chapters to work to ensure the support of their state's US Representatives and Senators and provide materials and action plans to states so that together we can successfully repeal this unjust denial of earned benefits that affect so many of our members. **Motion was made by Bette Marafino: Move that New England Alliance states once again endorse our resolution that was passed at national Alliance convention to repeal GPO/WEP and to make this issue a national Alliance priority. Lucy Edwards seconded motion. Motion passed unanimously.**

Additionally, we discussed **"Observation Status: "Current Hospital Issues in the Medicare Program"**. Observation status is a designation used by hospitals to bill Medicare. As a result of this designation, more and more seniors are experiencing difficulties getting Medicare coverage for admission to skilled nursing facility (SNF), along with other billing issues. In fact, Medicare estimates show that 1.6 million seniors were placed in "observation status" during a hospital stay in 2011. This is a 69 percent increase over the previous 5 years. Medicare beneficiaries who have played by the rules and contributed their entire working lives to the program so that they can have peace of mind and be covered for medically necessary services should not find themselves incurring unexpected costs and having to hire attorneys to get the coverage they already paid for.

Dr. Boffa made a presentation on the **10 Year Growth of Medicare in New England**. An article in the New England Journal of Medicine (Jencks SF et.al. 360:14) reported that 1 in 5 Medicare patients were readmitted to inpatient hospital setting within a month of discharge partly because the patients who had more complex health issues did not receive adequate education, outreach, and support to manage their condition. It is critical that we begin to devise a long-term solution to change the health care system to a proactive preventive model of care.

Mark Mancinho reported on the RI elections and Ballot questions and on the ongoing RI Best RX.

The meeting adjourned at 2 pm with the agreement that we meet again next spring.

Medicare May Need to Expand Options for Behavioral Weight Loss Counseling

Broader range of health professionals needed provide weight loss counseling for senior citizens, others in Medicare

An important addition to the “eat less, move more” strategy for weight loss lies in behavioral counseling to help achieve these goals. But research on how primary care practitioners can best provide behavioral weight loss counseling to obese Medicare patients in their practices - as encouraged by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) - remains slim.

The systematic review of this topic published this week in *JAMA* was led by researchers from the [Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania...Read More](#)



Older Women Lead Millions in Not Getting Screened for Cervical Cancer

Most new cervical cancer cases occur among women who have never or rarely been screened, says CDC - women over 65 may not need Pap test

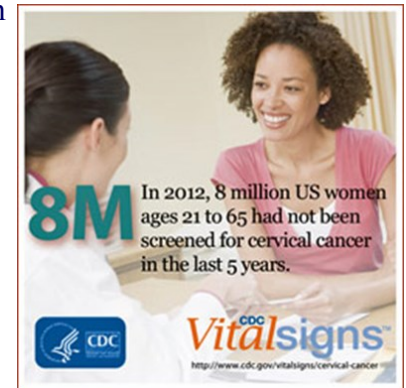
Despite evidence that cervical cancer screening saves lives, about eight million women ages 21 to 65 years have not been screened for cervical cancer in the past five years, with the older women the worst offenders, according to a new [Vital Signs](#) report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

More than half of new cervical cancer cases occur among women who have never or rarely been screened.

“Every visit to a provider can be an opportunity to prevent cervical cancer by making sure women are referred for screening appropriately,” said CDC Principal Deputy Director Ileana Arias, Ph.D.

“We must increase our efforts to make sure that all women understand the importance of getting screened for cervical cancer. No woman should die from cervical cancer.”

Researchers reviewed data from the 2012 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System to determine women who had not been screened for cervical cancer in the past five years. They analyzed the number of cervical cancer cases that occurred during 2007 to 2011 from CDC’s National Program of Cancer Registries and the National Cancer Institute’s Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results Program. Cervical cancer deaths were based on death certificates submitted to the National Vital Statistics System....[Read More](#)



Seniors Should Not Forget Medical Records as Holiday Travel Approaches

Personal health records allow seniors to take control of their health files during holiday travels all over the world

By C. Arnold Curry, M.D., MBA & CEO of [Medical Records Systems](#)

As thousands of senior travelers make plans to visit family this holiday season, they may not know that the top item to pack should be their electronic personal health record.

Seniors should build an up-to-date electronic medical record before hitting the road, in addition to packing festive clothes and holiday gifts. These records should provide travelers with access to their complete health history including electronic medical records, digital image studies, vaccines, medications and other special health conditions. Having an electronic personal health record provides easy access in the case of emergency or for added convenience when seeing physicians outside of the city in which senior travelers live.

When emergencies happen, it’s important to have medical records on hand immediately for prompt and accurate medical diagnosis. In the past, medical records were not easily accessible when traveling, however, technology has changed all of that. Now, solutions such as those afforded by [Medical Records Systems](#) help senior travelers control their health files from anywhere online, allowing them to worry less about an emergency and focus on plans to relax and have fun away from home....[Read More](#)



Medicare Lung Cancer Screening a Lifesaver for Seniors, Say Radiologists

CT lung cancer screening recommended for adults 55-80
with 30 pack a year smoking history, currently smoke or have quit within 15 years

New Medicare computed tomography (CT) lung cancer screening coverage provides high-risk seniors with access to care that can save more lives than any cancer screening test in history, says a news release from the American College of Radiology.

"CT lung cancer screening is the first and only cost-effective test proven to significantly reduce lung cancer deaths. Medicare coverage provides access to care for seniors and will help physicians save thousands of lives each year from the nation's leading cancer killer," said Ella Kazerooni, M.D., FACR, chair of the American College of Radiology Lung Cancer Screening Committee and American College of Radiology Thoracic Imaging Panel...[Read More](#)



Anxiety Hastens Alzheimer's for Seniors with Mild Cognitive Impairment

Late-life depression has been identified as a significant risk marker for Alzheimer's

A new study has identified anxiety as a condition that can hasten the development of Alzheimer's disease in people with mild cognitive impairment (MCI), who are at risk of slowly developing Alzheimer's over a few years. Although this study focused on adults over age 54, the news may not be as distressing for senior citizens, who are considerably less likely than younger adults to suffer anxiety disorders.

This study has shown clearly - for the first time, researchers say - that anxiety symptoms in older individuals diagnosed with MCI increase the risk of a speedier decline in cognitive functions - independent of depression (another risk marker). For MCI patients with mild, moderate or severe anxiety, Alzheimer's risk increased by 33%, 78% and 135% respectively....[Read More](#)



Hospice Care Achieving Its Goals with Medicare Patients: JAMA

Study finds Lower Rate of Hospitalization, ICU Admission,
Invasive Procedures and Costs, plus patient and family satisfaction

Hospice care has not clearly carved out its role in healthcare, although a new study shows it is achieving the goals many envisioned - significantly lower rates of hospitalization, intensive care unit (ICU) admissions and invasive procedures at the end of life, along with significantly lower health care expenditures during the last year of life.

This research included Medicare patients with deadly cancers - brain, pancreatic, metastatic malignancies - who received hospice care, according to a study in the November 12 issue of JAMA.

Multiple studies have documented the high intensity of medical care at the end of life, and there is increasing consensus that such care may produce poor outcomes and conflict with patient preferences....[Read More](#)



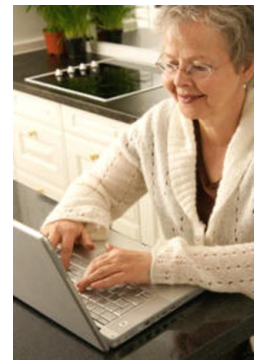
Seniors My Dash Hopes for Broader Use of Internet for Health Information

Few seniors use internet for health information, especially the large number with low health literacy

Providing health information on the internet may not be the "cure all" that it is hoped to be, at least for senior citizens. A new study shows few Americans 65 or older use the internet to find health information and many seniors have low health literacy. Among those with poor knowledge about health, less than ten percent use the internet to seek health information. The new concern is that greater reliance on digital health information will just leave many seniors further behind.

The research report is by Helen Levy of the University of Michigan in the US, who led the first-ever study to show that elderly people's knowledge of health matters, so-called health literacy, also predicts how and if they use the internet.

The findings appear in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, published by Springer. Data was analyzed from the 2009 and 2010 Health and Retirement Study, a nationally representative survey of more than 20,000 Americans 65 years and older...[Read More](#)



End-of-Life Planning: Toward 'A Beautiful Death'

Consumer Reports has released a guide to end-of-life planning for families – see video below

By Jenny Gold November 5, 2014



The American health care system is poorly equipped to care sensitively for patients at the end of life, a recent report from the Institute of Medicine found. But it is possible, through careful planning, for individuals to choose the kind of death they want. Consumer Reports has released a guide to end-of-life planning for families. The report offers tips for caregivers and individuals and profiles one man's "beautiful death" at home.

KHN staff reporter Jenny Gold interviewed author Nancy Metcalf about the report.

What follows is an edited transcript of their conversation...

To find out the answer to questions in the report "A Beautiful Death"....[Read More](#)

Seniors Want Doctors to Follow End-of-Life Wishes: Gerontological Society

Advance directives can benefit patients, families, and health care system; hold doctors accountable

Nearly one out of four senior Americans say that either they or a family member have experienced excessive or unwanted medical treatment, according to the latest issue of The Gerontological Society of America's *Public Policy & Aging Report (PP&AR)*, which goes on to show that Americans strongly support holding doctors accountable when they fail to honor patients' end-of-life health care wishes.

This *PP&AR*, titled "[Advanced Illness Care: Issues and Options](#)," features 12 articles that present new ways of understanding the complexity of securing appropriate advanced illness care and the decision-making dilemmas it presents.

It also provides a valuable benefit by reviewing specific programs, demonstrations, and tools that family members and providers can use in providing care to persons with advanced illness. These models are person- and family-centered, and preliminary evaluations find that they may be cost-effective as well. Support for the publication was provided by Compassion & Choices...[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 Status: "Current Hospital Issues in the Medicare Program"

ADD
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**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
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NAME

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

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