



## Rally at U.S. Capitol Fires up Seniors



On Thursday, September 19, 2014, the Alliance for Retired Americans, Americans United for Change and allies held a rally at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC to say, “Hands off Social Security and Medicare!” Additional event co-sponsors included AFSCME, the AFL-CIO, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT); Communications Workers of America; the National Education Association; Social Security Works; Granny off the Cliff; SEIU, and several others. The rally attracted busloads of Alliance members from the Mid-Atlantic area, as well as many elected officials and union leaders. Speakers included Sen. **Elizabeth Warren** (MA), House Democratic Leader **Nancy Pelosi** (CA), and Reps. **Bruce Braley** (IA), **Keith Ellison** (MN), **Joe Garcia** (FL), **Rick Nolan** (MN), **Jan Schakowsky** (IL), **Dina Titus** (NV), **Paul Tonko** (NY), AFT President **Randi Weingarten**, and the **Koch Sisters** (<http://tinyurl.com/nkafww6>). Maryland/DC Alliance member **Diane Fleming** spoke on behalf of the Alliance. Rep. Pelosi complimented the Alliance’s role in protecting Social Security and Medicare in her remarks. Video footage is at <http://tinyurl.com/l3ozbsh>. Photos from the day are at <http://tinyurl.com/k7s2bf7>.

## Your medical record is worth more to hackers than your credit card

*By Caroline Humer and Jim Finkle*

NEW YORK/BOSTON (Reuters) - Your medical information is worth 10 times more than your credit card number on the black market.

Last month, the FBI warned healthcare providers to guard against cyber attacks after one of the largest U.S. hospital operators, Community Health Systems Inc, said Chinese hackers had broken into its computer network and stolen the personal information of 4.5 million patients.

Security experts say cyber criminals are increasingly targeting the \$3 trillion U.S. healthcare industry, which has many companies still reliant on aging computer systems that do not use the latest security features.

"As attackers discover new methods to make money, the healthcare industry is becoming a much riper target because of the ability to sell large batches of personal data for profit," said Dave Kennedy, an expert on healthcare security and CEO of TrustedSEC LLC. "Hospitals have low security, so it's relatively easy for these hackers to get a large amount of personal data for medical fraud."...[Read More](#)



## The Color of Money: Make sure you can afford a reverse mortgage

You're 62 or older, and life has derailed your plans.

You didn't save nearly as much as you wanted to retire — but you had to stop working because of health issues.

You'll receive a Social Security benefit and a monthly pension. But there's a financial gap because of unexpected expenses. You need a new roof and other necessary home repairs.

Then you see a late-night television commercial about something called a reverse mortgage.

"You know some people have told me reverse mortgages sound too good to be true," the actor and former senator Fred Thompson says. "I mean, you get cash out of your home. No monthly payments and still own your home."

Could this be the answer? It may be. But be careful...[Read More](#)



## Simple Test May Detect Your Alzheimer's Risk Before Dementia Shows Up

Alzheimer's group had slower reaction, movement time, as well as less accuracy, precision in their movements



If you really want to know if you are at risk for Alzheimer's disease, York University researchers say a simple test that combines thinking and movement may reveal your risk, even before any obvious signs of dementia are obvious.

The researchers asked the participants to complete four increasingly demanding visual-spatial and cognitive-motor tasks, on dual screen laptop computers. The test aimed at detecting the tendency for Alzheimer's in those who were having cognitive difficulty even though they were not showing outward signs of the disease. The study was led by faculty of Health Professor Lauren Sergio and PhD candidate Kara Hawkins.

"We included a task which involved moving a computer mouse in the opposite direction of a visual target on the screen, requiring the person's brain to think before and during their hand movements," says Sergio in the School of Kinesiology & Health Science.

"This is where we found the most pronounced difference between those with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) and family history group and the two control groups."

Hawkins adds, "We know that really well-learned, stereotyped motor behaviours are preserved until very late in Alzheimer's disease." These include routine movements, such as walking. The disruption in communication will be evident when movements require the person to think about what it is they are trying to do.

For the test, the participants were divided into three groups – those diagnosed with MCI or had a family history of Alzheimer's disease, and two control groups, young adults and older adults, without a family history of the disease.

The study (full text) **Visuomotor Impairments in Older Adults at Increased Alzheimer's Disease Risk**, published in the **Journal of Alzheimer's Disease**, found that 81.8 per cent of the participants that had a family history of Alzheimer's disease and those with MCI displayed difficulties on the most cognitively demanding visual motor task.

"The brain's ability to take in visual and sensory information and transform that into physical movements requires communication between the parietal area at the back of the brain and the frontal regions," explains Sergio.

"The impairments observed in the participants at increased risk of Alzheimer's disease may reflect inherent brain alteration or early neuropathology, which is disrupting reciprocal brain communication between hippocampal, parietal and frontal brain regions."

"In terms of being able to categorize the low Alzheimer's disease risk and the high Alzheimer's disease risk, we were able to do that quite well using these kinematic measures," says Hawkins. "This group had slower reaction time and movement time, as well as less accuracy and precision in their movements."

Hawkins says the findings don't predict who will develop Alzheimer's disease, but they do show there is something different in the brains of most of the participants diagnosed with MCI or who had a family history of the disease.

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## Glimmer of Hope in Battle Against Pancreatic Cancer

Salk scientists find that a vitamin D-derivative makes tumors vulnerable to chemotherapy.



[Click to watch video at YouTube](#)

A synthetic derivative of vitamin D was found by Salk Institute researchers to collapse the barrier of cells shielding pancreatic tumors, making this seemingly impenetrable cancer much more susceptible to therapeutic drugs.

The discovery has led to human trials for pancreatic cancer, even in advance of its publication today in the journal *Cell*. By attacking a wound repair mechanism called fibrosis, the findings may also have implications for other tough-to-treat tumors, such as lung, kidney and liver cancer.

"While the success of this drug in humans with pancreatic cancer is still unclear, the findings in animal studies were strong, raising hope that ongoing clinical trials will give people with this terrible disease hope for a truly new type of therapy," says Ronald Evans, director of Salk's Gene Expression Laboratory and senior author of the new paper... **Read More**

## Diabetes Appears to be Leveling Off in U.S.

Prevalence continues to increase for some subgroups,  
like young adults; incidence rate up for Hispanic, black adults



The incidence and prevalence of diabetes, which doubled in the U.S. from 1990-2008 appears to have leveled off between 2008 and 2012, according to a new study in *JAMA*. Prevalence continued to increase at a significantly greater rate for young adults aged 20 to 44 years compared to older Americans. The incidence rate continued to increase in Hispanic and non-Hispanic black adults.

Incidence rates also continued to increase at a greater rate for the young adult group – 20 to 44 - compared with those aged 45 to 64 years, but not the senior group.

The earlier rapid increases have often been blamed on the large increase in the senior citizen population – the age group where diabetes is most prevalent. The researchers speculate that the recent slowing in diabetes cases may be due to a decrease in the rate of obesity, according to their report in the September 24 issue of *JAMA*.

Although there has been an increase in the prevalence and incidence of diabetes in the United States in recent decades, no studies have systematically examined long-term, national trends of this disease, according to background information in the article....[Read More](#)

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## Senior Citizens May Break Federal Law Using Drug Copay Coupons in Medicare

These discount coupons used in drug program for a specific brand  
name drug are considered kick-back and federal crime

*By Tucker Sutherland, editor, SeniorJournal*



Maybe it is much-to-do-about-nothing, but a warning – actually a “Special Advisory Bulletin” – has been issued by the Office of the Inspector General for Health and Human Services warning senior citizens not to use discount coupons from pharmaceutical manufacturers for a specific brand name drug in the Medicare Part D drug program. It is considered a kick-back and a federal offense.

The use of coupons by Medicare beneficiaries could impose significant costs on the Part D program because many coupons encourage beneficiaries to choose more expensive brand name drugs over less expensive alternative drugs, according to the Office of Evaluation and Inspections....[Read More](#)

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## Better Understand the Criminal Risk of Using Copay Coupons in Medicare

Health and Human Services officials provide a layman’s view of how  
anti-kick-back law impacts senior citizens, Medicare and taxpayers

The news yesterday that senior citizens run the risk of criminal prosecution for using copay coupons to purchase brand name prescription drugs in the Medicare Part D drug program is a unique occurrence that caused concern among seniors, who most often are the least likely U.S. citizens to break the law. A better understanding of this situation and the reason for this kick-back law has been provided by the Office of Inspector General of Department of Health and Human Services and its Office of Evaluation and Inspections....[Read More](#)



**Manufacturer Safeguards May Not Prevent Copayment Coupon Use for Part D Drugs.**  
**Special Advisory Bulletin: Pharmaceutical Manufacturer Copayment Coupons**

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## Drug Manufacturers Must Reform Marketing to Avoid Hurting Medicare

Current practice of ‘copay coupon’ damages Medicare Part D, can make seniors criminals



In response to the warning for senior citizens not to use brand name drug discount coupons in the Medicare Part D program, the president of the association for pharmacy benefit managers said the pharmacy manufacturers must “assure regulators that copay coupons don’t induce demand for brand drugs and increase costs in public programs like Medicare.”

The special advisory by the Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General (OIG) issued last week said "copay coupons," a drug manufacturer marketing tactic often used to inflate sales of brand drugs among patients with prescription drug coverage, may now be infiltrating Medicare Part D.

Federal anti-kickback laws prohibit suppliers from offering side-payments to increase sales of goods that are subsidized by the federal government....[Read More](#)



## National Group Reduces Antipsychotic Drug Use in Nursing Homes, Sets New Goals

National Partnership, including CMS, seeks to optimize the quality of life in America's nursing homes by improving care for all residents, especially those with dementia



After two years of success in reducing the use of antipsychotic medications by patients in long-stay nursing home care, the National Partnership to Improve Dementia Care today established a new national goal of reducing the use by 25 percent by the end of 2015, and 30 percent by the end of 2016. The public-private coalition includes the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), consumers, advocacy organizations, providers and professional associations.

Between the end of 2011 and the end of 2013, the national prevalence of antipsychotic use in long-stay nursing home residents was reduced by 15.1 percent, decreasing from 23.8 percent to 20.2 percent nationwide....[Read More](#)

## Think Medicare Pay Rate for Doctors Favors Surgeons?

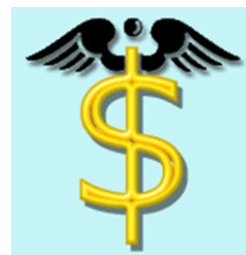
Surprising study still does not explain why proceduralists and surgeons earn much more money than primary doctors

A surprising new study pulls back the curtain on one of the most contentious issues in health care: differences in payment by Medicare and income between physicians who perform operations, procedures or tests, and those who don't.

Contrary to perception, the research indicates, the physician payment system is not inherently "rigged" to favor surgeons and other procedure-performing doctors.

The new findings counter the widely held belief that a simple difference in pay per minute explains why doctors who perform procedures often earn nearly twice as much money in a year as those who provide care mostly in office visits.

Instead, it appears the difference has more to do with how long it takes doctors to provide whatever care they give – or rather, how long the influential Medicare payment system assumes it takes them. The results, compiled by a team based at the University of Michigan Medical School, are published in the *Annals of Surgery*...[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"**

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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.**

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**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**

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SIGN THE PETITION!!!!**