

## THE GREATER GOOD

The foundation of democracy is the pursuit of the Greater Good. As a country, we pursue what is good for most of the people, most of the time. But that is not our approach for the care of our elderly. Of the 300 million people in America 77 million are baby boomers. This year a staggering majority of them turned 60. Even though it would be for the Greater Good of America, there are no provisions for taking care of these aging lives.

THERE ARE ONLY TIME BOMBS:

- Currently, there are 2 million falls per year among the elderly in nursing homes. There will be 80 million per year when the baby boomers come of nursing home age.
- On the average, baby boomers will have 4 to 5 chronic illnesses by the time they are 65...that equates to 350 million chronic conditions.
- 77 million families will be impacted by the disabilities and chronic conditions imposed on them by aging baby boomers.
- 77 million households are not equipped and never will be to handle chronic illnesses and dependent lives.
- \$77 trillion dollars will be imposed annually on the budgets of State and Federal Governments to care for the aging boomers.
- 77 million voters will be enraged by the lack of preparation being made for the Greater Good.
- The 46 million uninsured will become 100 million as the baby boomers become unemployed.
- There are currently 1.7 million nursing home patients in 18,000 nursing homes and 4 million assisted living residents in 23,000 assisted living facilities. We will need 17 times as many nursing homes and 18 times as many assisted living facilities to handle the 77 million baby boomers in a supportive setting.
- 2 million physicians, 2 million nurses, 7,500 hospitals and 750,000 other health professionals cannot handle the needs of 77 million aging baby boomers. But they do want their share of the health care dollars. Making the radical change from health maintenance to prevention and health preservation would serve the greater good and make more Medicare money available.

On top of these time bombs we have 77 million high expectations. If we are expecting these 77 million baby boomers to just accept nursing homes and assisted living as they are...think again. They tend to be dependent on others for their approach to health care and generally are not staying healthy; nor are they schooled on preserving their health and do not pay more for poor health. Compounding this, their health care providers are not schooled in detecting cause or in pursuing measurable outcomes. But they are paid regardless of results.

What we need for the Greater Good is not more rhetoric. The words "reform," "transform," "fine tune," and "incrementally change" are not going to meet the needs of the Greater Good. The health care Paradigm must shift to the following four postulates:

- 1) Switch from a system of health maintenance or disease management to one of health preservation. The Greater Good will be served if the 77 million baby boomers are focused on preserving wellness through fitness, nutrition, social relationships and prevention instead of treating illness. Then the focus can be on the following funding principles for our future health care system:
  - a. Embrace a National Health Policy for Universal Health Insurance funded by an individual withholding concept with personal savings accounts and tax deductions for health preservation investments.
  - b. Provide the economic incentives to providers for profiting from wellness and preventing illness so the Greater Good can be attained.
  - c. Pay the providers of future health care services for preservation outcomes: restoring health, preventing chronic diseases, and preserving wellness.
  - d. Vote for Comprehensive change in the way current services are paid for (pay for outcomes: reduction of medications, prevention of re-hospitalization and screenings, not just testing for treatment).
  - e. Pay for the uninsured and underinsured out of the cost savings by eliminating the waste in the current system by these four postulates.
- 2) Eliminate the acceptance of chronic disease as the responsibility of the health care providers or the employers of America. Support and reward the 77 million baby boomers for embracing wellness as a life style regardless of age.
- 3) Educate the physicians, nurses, therapists, social workers, etc. to use care planning for the pursuit of outcomes.
- 4) Train the health professionals to use technology for diagnosing the cause of disease, preventing re-occurrences, preserving wellness and treating illnesses.

Preventative care and health preservation services not only serve the Greater Good, they would be cheaper in the long run. The radical shift necessary to pursue prevention and health preservation, instead of treatment, may not be the first choice of America's 5 million health care professionals. It may not be the first choice of the 18,000 nursing home operators. But it should be America's first choice because it will serve the Greater Good. It will better serve the lives of the 77 million baby boomers and the 6 million people in nursing homes and assisted care.

All Americans have the right to stay healthy, for the Greater Good.