



BoomerAlert!

Designing the Medical
Care of Our Future

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For Immediate Release
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Boomers Change Things Once Again Designing the Medical Care of the Future

Virginia Beach, VA. 06/13/08 - Your meals delivered by a robot? Your med pack delivered by a vending machine? Your caregiver a personal trainer and coach? The medical facilities of the future will look very different from the dreary ones of today, according to BoomerAlert!, a new ideation group. "Boomers won't settle for the dependency that characterizes the rehab and long term care facilities of the present" says founder, Maureen Flanagan, PhD. "At a meeting on June 24th, we want to begin to re-envision what aging means in the 21st century."

Baby Boomers are those born from 1946 through 1964 and their presence has transformed every arena, from the political to the social. Their numbers make them impossible to ignore and they are about to burst upon a medical care system that is already broke and understaffed.

Medicare is under its second "funding alert," grimly noting that it will run out of money to cover operating costs from 2008 and beyond. It is in worse shape than Social Security.

The nursing shortage causes major staffing problems for medical facility administrators and it isn't likely to get better. The nation's medical system might be one million nurses short by 2020, according to a 2006 Health Resources and Human Services report. Currently, most hands-on patient care is left to the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) who are overworked and underpaid.

"Life in our care facilities is characterized by waiting," Flanagan says, "waiting to go to the bathroom, waiting for the medications, waiting for the meals and waiting for time to pass. Boomers don't wait well."

The caring people in nursing homes and rehabs are overwhelmed by the contrasting needs of the very sick and the mandates from insurers to cut costs. Politicians focus on the latter, but there is little discussion about how cost management affects the quality of life of those in care facilities, says Paul Flanagan, a technology consultant and co-founder of BoomerAlert!. It was his mother's ill health this past winter that gave him and his wife a close look at life in the hospital and rehabilitation facility. "This is much more than a cost issue. How we live should be our focus, not just how we pay for minimal care. Dependency is what is down the line for us unless we start the change process now."

There are other issues apart from quality of life. Even now, access to medical care is beginning to be a major problem because Doctors and care facilities don't want to take Medicare patients. Other issues such as pain management, the so-called "Living Will" or "Advance Directive" which is interpreted very narrowly and lack of inclusion of "alternative" medicine make the future of Boomer medical care problematic.

"There isn't enough money available to fund medical care as the system is currently structured. With the Boomers still in the workplace, Medicare can't cover the costs of treating their parents. Once the Boomers are in the system too, it will totally collapse," says Paul Flanagan, whose expertise is in change leadership. "BoomerAlert! is about finding innovative ways to deliver health care. The Boomers expanded the consumer directed experience. Just as telephone operators disappeared because technology enabled the customer to bypass them, health care must become source driven as well."

BoomerAlert! (www.boomeralert.org) will gather Boomers and others interested in the aging issue on June 24th at 7pm at the Church of the Ascension, 4853 Princess Anne Rd., Virginia Beach to start the innovation process. Speakers will cover the state of medical care from the perspective of the patient, the care provider and the care facility.

Boomers are known as the Sandwich Generation because of their dual roles as parents/grandparents and caregivers to their own parents. They have a unique perspective and wisdom, believes Maureen. "We've seen it all; we have the answers. We just need to get together, share them and get the innovation process started."

BoomerAlert! is an ideation group focused on re-inventing medical care for the Boomer generation. It is located in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

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