

Elderly Care For The Elderly

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The aging of the baby boomer generation along with the increasing longevity of life expectancies are evolving the demographics of the United States' society. Older adults account for a much larger percentage of the population than ever before and it is expected that by 2030, one in every five Americans will be eligible for Medicare (Elder Workforce Alliance [EWA], 2012). As Americans are living longer they are also at a greater risk of chronic illness. This shift commands attention and analysis of our current health care system to better meet the needs of this growing population.

Our current health care workforce is vastly under equipped to care for the rapidly aging senior population. The Institute of [Medicine](#) (IOM) estimates that by the year 2030, the demand for geriatricians will swell to 36,000 (Herdman et al., 2008). Today there are approximately 7,000 physicians trained in geriatric care and this number is steadily declining (Herdman et al., 2008). This critical shortage requires immediate action to ensure that the elderly are receiving the adequate care that they need.

It is not sufficient to delegate elderly care to family practitioners. Though most family medicine programs address patients with chronic illness, the curriculum is not age specific. Individuals over the age of 75 report an average of three chronic health conditions and use more than 4.5 prescription drugs at any given time (Kovner, Meezey, & Harrington, 2002). These conflating comorbidities require a diverse range of skills. Trained geriatricians are

adept at treating these conditions while bearing in mind the social, psychological, and biological changes that are associated with aging.

To prepare for the looming aging crisis, the United States must ...

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...lization, (Voelker, 2008). PACE addresses the three main recommendations of the Elders Workforce Alliance: the combined Medicare/Medicaid funding allows for 10% increase in payments to working staff and additional training and career advancement opportunities resulted in an outstandingly low 12% turnover rate in direct care workers (Hamrick, Kennedy-Malone & Barba, 2008).

Our current health care system is already overwhelmed by the influx of older patients. If we do not take action now to remedy this shortage, we will jeopardize the future of our aging society's health. Elder Workforce Alliance urges action for federally mandated requirements of geriatric training in all health professions, positive working conditions for [healthcare](#) providers devoted to elder care and redesigns of healthcare delivery models to achieve higher quality of care for geriatric patients.

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