



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH MAY PREVENT DIMINISHED HEALTH AND DISABILITY OF MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES

A forum was held by the Kaiser Foundation that discussed a document on fiscal issues associated with Medicare. Presenters at the forum were past Directors of their Center for Medicare and Medicaid Systems, past government officials associated with Medicare and representatives from health policy organizations.

Summary The Medicare rolls have been increasing and many Medicare beneficiaries are adversely affected by social determinants of health such as economic insecurity, poverty and lack of access to needed medical services. From 1975 to 2010, Medicare enrollment increased from 22.8 million to 39 million and disability insurance under age 65 from 2.2 to 8 million. There is evidence that Medicare beneficiaries may be economically insecure and not receiving needed services. For instance, poverty among the Medicare population in 2008, under the age of 65 was 35%, and 47% of the Medicare population lived under 200% of poverty. There are 2.2 million beneficiaries who live in nursing homes or other long term care facilities. However, many Medicare beneficiaries live in the communities without long term services.

Disability Prevention Issues There are health disparities among the Medicare population as a function of race and economic security, which are social determinants of health that contribute to unnecessary diminished health and disability. For instance, the fair or poor of health status of Medicare beneficiaries who are black is 58% and whites 41%. Self reported health status that is fair or poor of Medicare beneficiaries at or below the poverty level, is 42%, and 18% of beneficiaries at 300% above poverty. The high prevalence of chronic health conditions of the elderly is the result of diminished health that contributes to disability. For instance, the prevalence of chronic health conditions among Medicare beneficiaries with three or more chronic conditions is 49% for ages 65 to 84. Prevalence of some of the chronic conditions that cause physical and mental impairments and disability are: hypertension 65%, arthritis 65%, Osteoporosis 29% and 63% have cognitive impairments. In the aggregate, activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living total 46% between the ages of 65 and 85. The ADLs and IADLs double after the age of 85.

Activity There is an ongoing study of the health of elderly people in the U.S. and the implication of social determinants on the health of vulnerable people who are disabled and elderly.

Principle There should be provisions that address social determinants of health to prevent unnecessary diminished health and disability and secondary disabling conditions.