

December 10, 2008

Request for Abstracts

***Health Affairs* theme issue on building a long-term care system for the future, early-2010**

Requirements

Abstracts not to exceed 500 words

Abstracts due Tuesday, January 20, 2009

Submit abstracts to Don Metz, at dmetz@projecthope.org

Background, Objectives, and Details

Health Affairs is planning a theme issue in early-2010 on new directions for long-term care. Our goal is to produce a forward-looking issue that imagines a future in which various types of care – medical, personal, custodial – would be provided in cost-effective ways across a range of settings, from the home and community to institutions. We are producing this theme issue with generous support from the SCAN Foundation of Long Beach, California.

As part of our theme issue development process, we are issuing a request for abstracts, which are **due Tuesday January 20, 2009**. The editors will evaluate the abstracts and commission 10-12 authors to write papers based on their abstracts. We plan to complete the abstract evaluation process by early February 2009, at which time we will notify authors of abstracts selected for invitation. These invited papers will be due at the journal on July 2, 2009.

Invited papers will then be subjected to peer review during the summer of 2009. Those papers that the reviewers and editors deem appropriate will be revised and resubmitted between August and September 2009; copyediting and production for the issue will take place between October and December 2009, with publication scheduled for early-January 2010.

An overview of our goals and suggested topic list are provided below.

Abstract submissions should not exceed 500 words, and should include (in this order): author names and affiliations, proposed title, and abstract (along with contact information for the corresponding author).

If you wish to submit an abstract, please send it as an e-mail attachment directly to executive editor Don Metz, at dmetz@projecthope.org (he can also be reached by phone at 301-347-3907).

We thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to pass this invitation along to colleagues who might be interested, as well.

Overview and expectations

A future of rapid aging, and an increasing burden of chronic illness pose challenges for the U.S. in the financing and delivery of long-term care. In this special Health Affairs thematic issue, we are asking authors not merely to describe these problems, but rather as much as possible to set forth potential solutions that, ideally, are grounded in knowledge gained from research. We want to feature work that is forward looking and focused on what the future of long-term care could or should be, based on current trends and policy innovations that could come.

In this thematic issue, we do not want to limit the definition of long-term care to its traditional meaning of largely custodial care for persons with impairments of their activities of daily living. Rather, we want to broaden this term as much as possible to include the years of disability, frailty and potentially multiple chronic illnesses that can precede death and dying. Nor do we want to limit this issue to traditional discussions of finance and delivery. If possible, we want to shed light on some fundamental questions on what goals we as a society would hope to achieve for persons in this category of life. Ideally, this volume of Health Affairs would provide a policy roadmap for how the nation should cope with what are likely to be growing populations of people in this situation in the years ahead.

List of Potential Topics

With the help of expert advisers, we have identified broad themes that we hope the special issue will address. These topics are overlapping and inter-related. This list is also not necessarily exhaustive; authors may have ideas that we haven't thought of but that warrant exploration in this issue.

Please remember that *Health Affairs'* primary interest is in the policy-relevant implications of your findings and analysis. Authors who propose reforms should address obstacles to those reforms and how they might be overcome; develop and prioritize strategies for achieving the proposed reforms; and outline roles and responsibilities of various actors (e.g., public/private, state/federal, etc.), where appropriate. Not every paper has to be visionary, but priority will be given to papers that combine research on what exists currently with "visioning" of where we might go in the future.

The broad themes we have identified are as follows:

The big picture: New thinking in conceptualizing the field of long-term care. How might we disentangle – or, alternatively, wrap up in one package – the disparate areas of medical care, personal care services and housing? How best to overcome obstacles to home- and community-based care? How to decide where to focus – on improving individuals’ quality of life versus institutions’ quality of care? What is the role of consumer expectations and what should it be? How to move from institution-centered care to person-centered services?

More broadly, we seek articles and perspectives that examine the meaning of living with serious disability at or near the end of life. How will we as a society expect or allow people to live with frailty, dementia, other disabilities, and the awareness that death is or may be approaching? What will be the interfaces, if any, between custodial care or its equivalent, and palliative care for those who are seriously ill? How does what we have in place now as a society fall short of where we would like to go, and what is the roadmap for getting there?

Environmental overview: Definitions, descriptions and data on the types of services currently available and where; the populations served; the spending involved; and the needs that are not being met.

The changing landscape: What have been some of the major changes to date in LTC? What innovations have worked? What lessons have been learned? What have been obstacles to change?

Infrastructure: What do we have in terms of the “built” long-term care environment and the services offered there or in other settings? What is the state of the interface between hospital inpatient care, skilled nursing facility care and more custodial care? What are existing home care capabilities and limitations? What is the state of personal care and health services? How well does the system do at managing transitions from one care setting to another? What level of support is granted informal caregivers and what needs to be provided? What will be future housing needs for the frail elderly and how will these be met? What are the extent and the likely future of naturally occurring retirement communities? What are the special challenges for rural populations?

Workforce composition: Who’s taking care of the frail and sick elderly in these various settings and what should the workforce of the future be? How should we invest in the future quality of this workforce? What’s the impact of growing immigrant populations who are both needing and providing care? What are some innovative workforce models that improve the quality of jobs and pay provided paid caregivers? What interfaces are needed to support family caregivers?

Financing: What is the mix of private and public financing of long-term care at present and what might it be in the future? Is a one-to-nine ratio – roughly speaking, the current mix of private versus public funding – at all sustainable? How might we integrate funding streams as between Medicare, Medicaid and other payment sources to optimize cost-effective care? What has been the evolution of cash-and-counseling approaches and how far can these get? What are other “patient-centered” payment models? What are future prospects for the private long-term care insurance market? From the patient perspective, what options should exist going forward if at all for blended Medicare/Medicaid/private pay options? What are the likely limits of further growth in Medicaid spending on the disabled elderly? How if at all can these costs be controlled?

Quality and accountability: what have been successes and failures of facilities regulation? What are shortcomings of standards for assisted living facilities? Are we doing a good job of measuring the quality of care? Does that matter, and should we be focused more on residents’ quality of life? How might we “reengineer” long-term care to improve quality? What does the evidence show about quality-improvement strategies as they have been applied to long-term care settings?

Technology: What will be the role of emerging and new technologies in the future in the provision of long-term care/community-based care? E.g., telemedicine, remote monitoring, etc. What evidence exists about the use of these technologies to date and attendant results?

International comparators: What innovations or distinct systems features exist abroad that the U.S. should be emulating? What has been tried overseas that we should avoid?

State models: Are there particular state models or innovations that should be taken to scale nationwide, based on successes to date? Are there others that should be jettisoned?

End-of-life concerns: These can range from the financial to the spiritual. On the financial side: Medicare spends 1/8 of outlays on the last month of life. Shaving that by a week would save billions of dollars. Are we ready to “go there”? On the emotional/spiritual side, what is it like to live with frailty, dementia, disability and the coming of death? What should it be? Should there be national goals in this arena, or as Americans, will we let each individual “tough it out” and evolve a myriad heterogeneous approaches with varying degrees of care?

Strategies for achieving reform: If long-term care and everything else referenced above is left out of federal legislation to move the nation toward “universal” health insurance coverage, how will we make progress in these areas? What might be a strategy for compelling the political process at the federal or state levels to act in various areas? What demonstration projects or

other initiatives should be embarked upon to produce more data and slowly build political support

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Questions? Email Don Metz at dmetz@projecthope.org

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