

# The Case for Better Care

## *Chronic Illness: Who's at Risk?*

### Chronic Conditions Disproportionately Affect Older Adults

- Older adults are more likely to have multiple chronic conditions. 9 in 10 older Americans (age 65 and older) have at least one chronic health condition and 77% have multiple chronic conditions.<sup>1</sup>
- The average 75-year-old has 3 chronic conditions and takes 5 prescription drugs.<sup>2</sup>
- Among Medicare beneficiaries, 9 out of 10 deaths are associated with 9 specific chronic conditions: congestive heart failure, chronic lung disease, cancer, coronary artery disease, renal failure, peripheral vascular disease, diabetes, chronic liver disease, and dementia.<sup>3</sup>

### The Impact on Low-Income Older Persons

- Older adults living below the poverty level are more likely than those at higher income levels to have multiple chronic conditions.<sup>4</sup>
- In 2005, the percentage of Medicare beneficiaries who delayed care was significantly higher for poor, near-poor and middle income beneficiaries than for high-income beneficiaries.<sup>5</sup>
- Low-income adults ages 55 to 84 were more likely than adults in the same age group who were not poor to have visited an emergency room in the past year.<sup>6</sup>

### The Impact on Older Women

- Because women tend to live longer than men, older women are more likely to have chronic conditions, many of which carry multiple, significant health concerns.<sup>7</sup>
- Often, these older women are also caregivers to spouses, other relatives or friends who are also suffering from one or more chronic health conditions.<sup>8</sup>

### The Impact on Older Racial and Ethnic Minority Populations

- Health disparities pervade our nation. Racial and ethnic minorities experience more chronic diseases and higher mortality rates from these diseases.<sup>9</sup>
- Among adults aged 65 and older, nearly 2 out of 3 (65 percent) African Americans have hypertension, compared with 49% of older Hispanics and 47% of the older White population.<sup>10</sup>
- 1 in 4 Hispanics aged 65 and older and 23 percent of older African Americans, have diabetes, compared with 14% of the older adult White population.<sup>11</sup>
- 39% of White adults aged 65 and older reported very good or excellent health in 2004, compared with 24% of non-Hispanic older African Americans and 29% of older Hispanics.<sup>12</sup>
- Black and Hispanic Medicare beneficiaries are more likely than non-Hispanic White

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- <sup>1</sup> Machlin, S., Cohen, J., & Beaugard, K. (2008). Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. *Health Care Expenses for Adults with Chronic Conditions, 2005*. (Statistical Brief #203). Retrieved July 22, 2009, from [http://www.meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/data\\_files/publications/st203/stat203.pdf](http://www.meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/data_files/publications/st203/stat203.pdf).
- <sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Merck Institute of Aging & Health (2004). *The State of Aging and Health in America 2004*. Retrieved October 2, 2009 from, [http://www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/State\\_of\\_Aging\\_and\\_Health\\_in\\_America\\_2004.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/State_of_Aging_and_Health_in_America_2004.pdf).
- <sup>3</sup> The Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice (2008). *Tracking the Care of Patients with Severe Chronic Illness: The Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care 2008*. The Trustees of Dartmouth College. Retrieved October 13, 2009, from [http://www.dartmouthatlas.org/atlas/2008\\_Chronic\\_Care\\_Atlas.pdf](http://www.dartmouthatlas.org/atlas/2008_Chronic_Care_Atlas.pdf).
- <sup>4</sup> National Center for Healthcare Statistics (2006). *Health, United States, 2006*. Hyattsville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved October 4, 2009, from <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/hs/hs06.pdf>.
- <sup>5</sup> Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2008). *National Healthcare Disparities Report*. Retrieved October 6, 2009, from <http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/nhr08/nhr08.pdf>.
- <sup>6</sup> Schoenborn, C. & Heyman, K. (2009). *Health Characteristics for Adults Aged 55 and Over: United States, 2004-2007*. (National Health Statistics Report No. 16). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved July 23, 2009, from <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr016.pdf>.
- <sup>7</sup> Anderson, G. (2007). *Chartbook, Chronic Conditions: Making the Case for Ongoing Care*. Johns Hopkins University. Retrieved October 1, 2009, from [http://www.fightchronicdisease.org/news/pfcd/documents/ChronicCareChartbook\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.fightchronicdisease.org/news/pfcd/documents/ChronicCareChartbook_FINAL.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009). *The Power of Prevention: Chronic Disease...The Public Health Challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Retrieved July 23, 2009, from <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/publications/PowerOfPrevention/pdfs/2009-Power-of-Prevention.pdf>.
- <sup>10</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Merck Institute of Aging & Health (2004). *The State of Aging and Health in America 2004*.
- <sup>11</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Merck Institute of Aging & Health (2004). *The State of Aging and Health in America 2004*.
- <sup>12</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2007). *Trends in Health and Aging: Major Trends and Patterns in Health of Older Hispanics in the United States*. Retrieved October 5, 2009, from [http://www.cdc.gov/NCHS/ppt/aging/hispanic\\_health.ppt#251,1](http://www.cdc.gov/NCHS/ppt/aging/hispanic_health.ppt#251,1), Trends in Health and Aging.
- <sup>13</sup> Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2008).