



World Health News

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Story of the Week

A Neglected Issue

Opinion

Stuart H. Shapiro, M.D.

(The Patriot News, Harrisburg, November 12, 2007)

"A review of Republican and Democratic presidential hopefuls' official campaign Web sites shows nearly all of the candidates ignoring one of our nation's most serious social and fiscal challenges. Who is going to pay for the long-term care needs of nearly 80 million baby boomers? *Congressional Quarterly* stated in a recent report that nearly 70 percent of those turning 65 this year will eventually require some form of long-term care, and a recent poll found that 85 percent of Americans believe that if they need long-term care, that need will be met fully by Medicare, Medicaid or their existing health insurance. Some believed that seniors' long-term health care needs would be provided by Social Security. They're all wrong: Social Security won't, Medicare and other health insurance programs won't and state Medicaid programs are stretched beyond their limit. The Urban Institute recently reported that long-term care is a leading cause of catastrophic out-of-pocket costs for families, and that few people have insurance coverage against the high cost of long-term care. America is rapidly heading into a fiscal tsunami of elder care that dwarfs in magnitude the collective crises in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. With the nation beginning to focus on the 2008 presidential election, will this issue receive the attention it deserves from our presidential candidates? If a recent analysis of candidates' Web sites is any indication, the answer is 'no.'"

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