[IMAGE]

Persistent Problems, Big Bills

Chronic health conditions can lead to significant health problems if left unchecked, and their incidence is rising: By 2020, 157 million Americans (or nearly half the population) are expected to suffer from one or more chronic conditions. The elderly are particularly prone to having multiple chronic health problems.

Utilizing a national sample of over 1 million people age 65 or older and enrolled in Medicare in 1999, data were obtained on chronic conditions including hypertension and diabetes. Data showed that 82% of the Medicare beneficiaries had at least one chronic condition, increasing in prevalence with age to nearly 90% in those 85 and older. On average, there were more than two chronic conditions per person. Over half of the subjects had a circulatory system-based chronic condition. Also, two-thirds of all individuals 65 or older had two or more chronic conditions; 43% had three or more; and 24% had four or more.

This study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* additionally found that individuals with four or more chronic conditions were approximately 100 times more likely to have been hospitalized for a condition that could have been averted through proper primary care. Per-person Medicare expenditure increases coincided with the number of chronic conditions, from about $200 for seniors with no chronic conditions to nearly $14,000 for beneficiaries with four or more.

What does all this information mean to you? Heed these numbers to avoid major health problems and big bills as you age, by simply maintaining wellness, through exercise, a good diet and doing nothing to excess.

Reference:

Wolff JL, Starfield B, Anderson G. Prevalence, expenditures, and complications of multiple chronic conditions in the elderly. *Archives of Internal Medicine* 2002:162(20), pp. 2269-2276.

For more information on senior health issues, go to http://www.chiroweb.com/tyh/senior.html

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