



Costs of Long Term Care

By Joe Steckler, *President, Helping Seniors of Brevard County*



While the number of seniors in the U.S. who need Long Term Care (LTC) is sky rocketing, the industry is reducing its care capability. This may be driven by many factors, but arguably an unsatisfactory profit margin is one cause. I could flood you with statistics showing why we need more care facilities, not less, but my main intent is to encourage our medical community and those who care for the elderly to become better advocates for those who really have no voice.

increasing aging population and a family system that has gotten away from caring for elders in the home. What many do not think about when discussing this problem is that with living longer we also encounter service needs that are difficult for family to provide

Let's look first at the personnel structure of the care system, which ensures success or failure in many cases. Here I am talking about the staffing problem that I believe every LTC facility faces. Every facility has an Administrator. Can you imagine a facility whose Administrator never visits a patient or a Care Manager that has to be asked by a patient to outline a care plan! Realize also that every staff requirement is filled to the bare minimum including the nurses. Their main occupational task is the distribution of medications.

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Finally we arrive at the heart and soul of the problem – the LTC aide. These men and women do the bulk of patient care. They clean the patient, get them ready for the day, change bed linens, dress the patient, and meet many other tasks that we call Activities of Daily Living. This is a hard, demanding job that every facility has to fill in order for the facility to exist.

The aides, laundry, and cooking staff are the lowest paid of the support staff. Can you imagine doing the work described for aides for about \$10 an hour, a wage lower than the fast food industry worker. The only way to pay them more is to ask management to take less profit or to increase client fees. With good assisted living facilities charging \$5,000 or more a month, and nursing homes costing an average of \$10,000 a month, how will these costs be met?

I understand these dynamics for a business, and LTC is a much needed business in a country with a rapidly



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Contact: Helping Seniors of Brevard Travel Club Office 321-978-5211
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