

Reassurance About Health Care Reform

AMDA Communications Committee Chair and medical director Daniel Bluestein, MD, CMD, shares some facts about health care reform.

There are many rumors going around about what health care reform would mean to Americans. The truth is that you don't have to worry about your elderly family member/friend in a long-term care facility. Doctors who specialize in geriatrics and long-term care will continue to treat their patients with compassion, respect, and the best medical care—regardless of what changes are made to the health care system.

But it is important to know about some reforms proposed in the most complete bill to date, the America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 (H.R. 3200):

- Medicare would not end, and benefits wouldn't be cut.
- The legislation would not require rationing of care.
- It would not promote euthanasia or assisted suicide.
- The legislation would not mandate that government officials visit Medicare beneficiaries to talk about how they want to die.
- It would not make you give up your current insurance.

The renewed debate over end-of-life care should nevertheless prompt you to review advanced care planning with your physician. Have him or her help you make choices that are in the best interest of your elderly family member/friend.

► **Questions to Ask Your Physician:**

- What should we know about end-of-life care? Why is it important for my elderly family member/friend to share what care he/she wishes at that time?
- Where can I get more information about what services are covered in the long-term care facility?

► **What You Can Do:**

- If your elderly family member/friend has questions or

fears about health care reform, make sure to get the facts. Reassure that person that reform won't take away insurance coverage or access to needed medications.

- Make sure that your elderly family member/friend has an advance directive and has discussed treatments such as CPR and tube feeding with family members and others who will be involved in that person's end-of-life care.
- Focus on quality of life issues and what you can do to make your elderly family member/friend happy and comfortable. For example, offer favorite foods, take him/her to spiritual services, visit with children and pets, and share music, movies, and other entertainment.

For more information:

- AMDA Government Affairs Department: ga@amda.com; 410-740-9743
- Health Policy Advisor: <http://www.amda.com/publications/health-policyadvisor.cfm>
- Myths vs. Facts: aarp.convio.net/site/PageNavigator/Myths_vs_Facts_splash
- AMDA Member and renowned author, Jerald Winakur, MD, CMD, FACP: An Open Letter to President Obama: www.amda.com/news/OpenLetterObama.pdf
- Health Care Reform and Economic Recovery: [www.caringfortheages.com/article/S1526-4114\(09\)60006-8/fulltext](http://www.caringfortheages.com/article/S1526-4114(09)60006-8/fulltext)
- Health Reform Options Would Affect LTC: [www.caringfortheages.com/article/S1526-4114\(09\)60140-2/fulltext](http://www.caringfortheages.com/article/S1526-4114(09)60140-2/fulltext)