Growing seniors and Nursing Home Shortages

As we move into the second decade of the millennia, Americans are facing a new social issue that has been largely ignored. The United States population of seniors over age 65 will increase to 20 percent in 2030, dramatically increasing the number of retirees. This becomes a major problem as the number of nursing homes is declining. Negative perceptions of nursing homes and hospitals have caused people to avoid these facilities, creating a gap in care.

Most seniors enjoy the comfort and familiarity of their home and wish to age there instead of a care facility. A decline in health comes with old age and with the rise of patients diagnosed with cancer and Alzheimer’s disease, it has become necessary for 24-hour care services to be available.

To further augment the negative perceptions of long-term care centers, over the years, many nursing homes have closed due to outdated facilities. With the recession and the collapse of the housing market, the healthcare systems in place to aid seniors have experienced a significant decline in resources. Existing nursing homes and special care facilities are suffering for discontinued funding from patients previously covered by the Medicaid and seniors are being forced to sell their homes to afford long term care services contributing to the failure of some facilities. This process presents a major problem for seniors who choose to pay out of pocket, who will eventually exhaust all funds to support special care needs. Last year, the average cost of an annual stay in a nursing home rose 30 percent, taking it to $77,745 annually. Although it can be cheaper if the patient does not require any specialized medical needs, it still can be a devastating impact to a senior’s income. In order for the nursing home to continue to run within budget, the decline in staff and medical care quality seem to correlate. It is difficult to maintain a business in a declining industry with few resources and challenging to acquire services and funds. It is important not to forget that it is not the business that is lost, but the aging seniors that require these special care and services who will suffer most from such setbacks.