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HEALTH

Homecare Delivers Value—Along With Oxygen and Wheelchairs

NewsUSA

(NU) - Given a choice, most people would choose the comforts of their own home over a stay in a hospital or nursing home. But for many, receiving care at home is not an option.

That's why an overwhelming majority (78 percent) of American voters say they would vote for congressional candidates who would strengthen Medicare coverage for power wheelchairs, oxygen devices, hospital beds and other durable medical equipment and services used in the home according to a 2007 survey.

"Homecare is both cost-effective and is the preferred choice of consumers," said Tyler J. Wilson, president of the American Association for Homecare. "It is part of the answer to the Medicare and Medicaid funding problems. Yet members of Congress have proposed deep cuts to Medicare reimbursement for durable medical equipment, on top of previous cuts and other reductions that have yet to take effect. Broad bipartisan voter sentiment calling for better policy may elevate homecare as a policy priority for Congress and the White House."

Providers of durable medical equipment deliver home oxygen therapy, wheelchairs, hospital beds and other items to Americans who require medical care at home. They also deliver independence for Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries and deliver value to taxpayers since quality medical care at home keeps seniors out of emergency rooms, hospitals and nursing homes.

Homecare is a very cost-effective method for nearly 8 million Americans who depend on homecare for medically required services and equipment. According to studies in medical journals, the cost of home intravenous antibiotic treatment is much lower than what it would be at a hospital. In February 2008, USA Today analyzed federal spending on seniors and found that, "long-term care costs per senior have declined slightly in the last three years because of a move away from nursing homes to less-expensive homecare."

Advances in technology for home medical equipment and telemedicine are expanding the value and clinical effectiveness of homecare.

Studies have also shown that oxygen therapy reduces mortality and hospitalization rates. And not only does it reduce these rates, but oxygen can be provided to a patient with severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease who lives at home for one year at less than the average Medicare cost for one day in the hospital, which is about $4,600.

Department of Health and Human Services Secretary, Michael Leavitt, has called for a greater use of home and community-based care because "it's not only where people want to be served, but it's radically more efficient."

For more information on homecare, visit www.aahomecare.org.

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Category

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