

Physicians feeling Medicare strain

Obituaries

Many will limit the number of patients to offset rising costs

By Lois M. Collins
Deseret Morning News

Nearly one in four senior citizens new to the Medicare program report having difficulty finding a physician to provide primary care, according to a government-sponsored survey.

Other senior citizens will also have trouble finding physician care if slated Medicare-payment cuts go into effect Jan. 1. That warning was issued Tuesday by the president of the American Medical Association and his Utah counterparts in a "house call" to the Wasatch Front.

Dr. William G. Pledsted III, a thoracic and cardiovascular surgeon from California when he's not wearing his AMA hat, said a survey of

physicians found that 60 percent will limit the number of Medicare patients they see if they must take a 10 percent cut in what they're paid at a time when their overhead keeps increasing. Projected payment cuts will total 40 percent and physician overhead will increase by 20 percent in the next nine years.

The Medicare reimbursement cut applies only to physicians, not to others involved in health care, including hospitals, and that's another area of contention, Pledsted said.

Hardest hit will be patients who have recently turned 65 and are trying to establish a physician-patient relationship using their new Medicare coverage, or those who move and need to find a new physician.

Dr. Catherine J. Wheeler, immediate past president of the Utah Medical Association and a Salt Lake gynecologist, said many primary-care physicians are struggling because of the cost associated with running a medical practice.

Each year, fewer doctors choose to be primary care, which will create even more problems in the future. And it all comes, she added, at a time when baby boomers are poised to enroll in Medicare.

Dr. Mark N. Bair, president-elect of the UMA, said he and colleagues in a Utah County emergency department already see more senior citizens and people with disabilities who have Medicare come in because they don't have primary-care physicians. Or they stop taking their medications and get so sick they end up in the emergency room. That, he added, is the most expensive option for health care.

An estimated 216,000 Utahns are on Medicare and another 63,000 patients have the military's insurance, Tri-Care, which matches its reimbursement rates to that paid by Medicare. Because so many insurance companies base reimbursement for services on Medicare, the effect will be even greater, said

Pledsted.

The doctors also complain that a type of Medicare called Medicare Advantage pays 12 percent more than normal Medicare in what was supposed to be but has not become a more managed-care model. It's an unfair advantage, they said.

The cut is part of a formula created by Congress and the doctors hope patients will let their representatives know they don't like it. Information is online at www.patientsactionnetwork.org.

But the formula didn't take into account that more patients are using Medicare and that there are fewer practitioners, so volume has gone up and reimbursements down. At the same time, said Pledsted, only a "shocking" 40 percent of family-practice medical residencies were filled by American students.

Last year, the reimbursement cut was delayed, and it will be added to this coming January's decrease.

Many doctors, including

Wheeler, quit accepting Medicare some time ago, she said. She cares for some of her early Medicare patients but writes off the cost as cheaper than dealing with the program. But there are limits to the number of patient with whom you can afford to do that.

The enlarging gap between operating expenses and reimbursements also means that many doctors cannot afford to invest in new technologies and innovations that could greatly help patients, said Pete Friedman, AMA spokesman.

Among Utah's special challenges are that it has many rural and frontier areas that have high proportions of senior citizens.

The doctors want to get the message, said Pledsted, to "patients who are seniors, those who are disabled, or those who care about them. This will have a devastating effect on access."

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Glen Birch Farnsworth 1943 ~ 2007



Glen Birch Farnsworth was born in Salt Lake City, Utah on May 17, 1943 to Eldred Birch Farnsworth and Cleone Marsh.

He died in North Salt Lake, Utah on June 10, 2007, five years after being diagnosed with cancer.

Glen was raised in Magna, Utah, and graduated from Cyprus High School in 1961, where he was active in athletics and student government. He maintained many of those close friendships throughout his life.

During his young adult years, Glen enjoyed playing softball, and participated in four all-church softball tournaments. Glen graduated from the University of Utah in 1966, and began a 31+ year career with Utah Social Services.

Glen was married to his high school sweetheart, Marcella Laurel Johnson, in the Salt Lake Temple on June 25, 1964. Glen and Marcella had six children, including twin sons that died at birth. Marcella died on May 28, 1980.

Glen married Mary Alice Baird (his special angel) on March 6, 1982, in the Salt Lake Temple. Glen and Alice had two children.

Glen's greatest joy in life was raising his family, and watching his children succeed with their goals and interests in academics, athletics, dance, music, and church activities. He was very proud of their accomplishments and the honorable men and women they have become.

He was a faithful member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout his life, and served as the Bishop of the Taylorsville Utah West Stake 4th Ward. Glen found joy in giving to others, and had an understanding heart.

The family would like to give special thanks to Dr. Elizabeth Prystas, Kathy, Barbara, Sara, and all of the staff at Wasatch Oncology Associates for their kind and compassionate care.

Glen is survived by his wife, Alice, and children, Darin (Janet), Nicolette Johnson (Joe), Troy (Kajsa), Crystal Armstrong (Chris), Bryan, and Michelle. He is also survived by 10 grandchildren and niece, Janet Stevenson. He is preceded in death by his parents, wife, Marcella, twin sons, Todd and Tory, and sister, Barbara Snow.

Funeral services will be held Thurs., June 14, 2007 at 11:00 a.m. at the Eaglewood Ward Chapel (200 S. Eagle Ridge Drive, North Salt Lake). A viewing will be held at Wasatch Lawn Mortuary (3401 S. Highland Drive, Salt Lake City) on Wed., June 13, 2007 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., and also at the Eaglewood Ward Chapel at 10:00 a.m. prior to the services. The interment will be at Valley View Memorial Park.

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MCVEAN

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bombs.

Sheriff's deputies and FBI agents scoured the scene and found a rusted AK-47 rifle, 500 rounds of ammunition and more survival gear. Lacy said they returned to the scene again and found a few more bone fragments.

"A few more teeth, a vertebrae. There isn't much there, but enough to identify him," the sheriff said.

Once the evidence is finally processed, Pedersen said the FBI will be closing its case on McVean, Alan "Monte" Pilon, and Robert Mason.

"As far as the FBI is concerned, all three have been accounted for," he said Tuesday.

The cowboy, whom Lacy said wishes to remain anonymous, stands to receive a reward of up to \$170,000 offered by the FBI and the Cortez Police Department. Details are still being worked out over how much he could get.

"That is something we will address with the rancher who found the remains," Pedersen said.

A new timeline

The announcement that McVean's body had been found puts an end to a mystery that has nagged authorities for nine years.

"We figure that all of them were dead within seven days after it started," Lacy said.

In an interview with the Deseret Morning News on Tuesday, the sheriff outlined what he believes were the final days of the three fugitives.

"The one (Mason) that shot my deputy, he died within seven days," Lacy said. "Pilon was dead within the first day or two. McVean died the first day after this started."

On May 29, 1998, authorities said McVean, Pilon and Mason stole a water truck in Colorado.

Cortez Police Officer Dale Claxton stopped the truck, but before he could even unbuckle his seat belt, a camouflage-clad man stepped out and opened fire on the police car. Claxton was shot 29 times.

As they fled across the Colorado-Utah border, the men shot and wounded two Montezuma County sheriff's deputies and then took off into the hot, harsh deserts near Hovenweep. As the days wore on, more than 500 law enforcement officers participated in the manhunt.

"There's a relief because

it's over," said Roy Taylor, a former Blanding police officer who participated in the manhunt. "Knowing what happened, knowing that all three of them are deceased, not running around maybe plotting something else."

Ready for war

A few days into the manhunt, June 4, 1998, authorities said Mason used a high-powered rifle to take a shot at a Utah state employee from more than a mile away. San Juan County sheriff's deputy Kelly Bradford responded and was shot and wounded.

With pipe bombs surrounding his body, police believe Mason, 26, shot and killed himself. Taylor said he guarded Mason's body until the medical examiner showed up.

"He had a Kevlar helmet, body armor, everything," he told the Deseret Morning News. "They were ready to go to war."

As the months dragged on, it seemed that Pilon and McVean had vanished into the desert. There were numerous "sightings" that would make law enforcement jump. None of them panned out. Theories abound over what the men were planning to do with the water truck. Was it going to be used for a bomb? Was it just for a group of survivalists stashing things in the desert to wait out the apocalypse?

Then in 1999, a group of Navajo hunters stumbled upon a camouflage backpack and a gun. They then found the remains of Pilon. He had a broken ankle and a gunshot wound to the head. It remains a mystery if Pilon, 30, shot himself or someone else killed him.

"I think there's a good possibility all three did themselves," Taylor said.

Lacy believes Pilon and McVean died quickly. A watch found with McVean's remains had stopped on May 30.

"The first two were dead after a couple of days for sure," the sheriff said. "Mason died seven days later."

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3 teens escape from treatment center

By Geoff Liesik
For the Deseret Morning News

ROOSEVELT — Three teenage boys are in the Split Mountain Youth Detention Center in Vernal after authorities say they overpowered a security guard early Monday morning and escaped from a residential treatment center.

Duchesne County Sheriff's Deputy Stephanie Cox said just before 1:30 a.m., a 15-year-old at the Cedar Ridge Academy attacked the unarmed guard with a bottle of water, striking him repeatedly in the face. After subduing the man, the boy and two

17-year-olds bound him with a karate belt.

"They took his keys, took his wallet and also made him give them the alarm code," Cox said.

The deputy said the teens covered the victim's mouth with blue painter's tape before fleeing the treatment center about 7 miles northwest of Roosevelt in the man's Jeep. Cox said authorities were contacted after another teen in the center called off-duty staff and alerted them to the incident.

Deputies and Roosevelt city police caught up to the escapees less than three miles from the center. They

were taken into custody without incident.

According to Cedar Ridge's Web site, it is a state-licensed "therapeutic boarding school" for 70 students between the ages of 13 and 18. The academy lists karate as an "integral aspect" of its treatment model.

Cox said the boys, who are all from out of state, will be referred to juvenile court and could face charges of kidnapping, robbery, conspiracy and possession of stolen property. The 15-year-old will also likely face an assault charge, she said.

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DEATH

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about killing American soldiers, Edwards said.

The man also made comments about killing people if given a chance, according to the affidavit.

During the investigation, officers learned the man had purchased guns in October from a pawn shop using a false resident alien number.

A resident alien is a non-U.S. citizen who lives in the United States with temporary residency status. A resident alien number is an identification tool.

Provo police officers were also investigating the man, having previously arrested him in March and April for several traffic violations. Provo officers also previously had confiscated an SKS assault rifle from the man.

"Every officer that had contact with him thought there was something wrong," Edwards said. "The Provo officer was doing a lot of footwork on his own, and we were doing things. We were unaware that each agency was looking at this guy."

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Orem officers eventually learned of the shared interest and approached the Provo department. From Provo investigators, Orem police learned the man had purchased guns in Provo using a different resident alien number.

"There's no vehicle in place that would have told us about the different resident alien numbers used on both of these applications," Edwards said. "We found out when we went looking for that information."

Buying guns with two different resident alien numbers, or fictitious numbers, is a felony. That piece of information, plus information gathered during interviews with the man's roommates, was enough to get a warrant, Edwards said.

Officers from Orem, Provo and Immigrations and Customs Enforcement served the warrant Friday at the man's Orem home at 1428 S. 680 East. He is being held in the Utah County Jail on \$250,000

cash-only bail.

In his car they found a Russian rifle, several AK-47 magazines and weapon parts and weapon drawings, according to the affidavit.

However, the rifle was not the gun from the application, and police are still looking for two AK-47s, Edwards said.

"You deal with people day in and day out who are angry and irrational," Edwards said. "This was a situation where everybody who dealt with him thought, 'We don't want to have another Virginia Tech situation.' To sit around and watch videos and talk about how they'd kill people... that's frightening. We decided to be proactive."

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