



Happy Birthday to the First of the Baby Boomers to Turn 65!
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The first of the baby boomers (defined those born between 1946 and 1964) will begin to turn 65 this month. Some have characterized this as the "silver tsunami" as the number of Americans over the age of 65 will double by 2030 and grow to 70 million people. The baby boomer generation, as a group, is healthier, better educated, and wealthier than prior generations. Today, U.S. life expectancy is 77.8 years, compared to 66.7 years in 1946. There is growing concern among policymakers and healthcare stakeholders about the health resources consumers 65 and older will require, and for how long, and the pressure this will place on an already overburdened U.S. health system.

Key statistics related to aging and healthcare consumption include:

- More than 80% of adults over 65 years of age have one or more chronic conditions; more than 60% have two or more chronic conditions.
- People with chronic conditions are responsible for 78% of all health care spending, 95% of all Medicare spending, and 77% of all Medicaid spending for community-dwelling adults.
- Falls are one of the leading causes of injury death, and the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma for consumers 65 and older.
- About 31% (11.2 million) of noninstitutionalized older persons live alone (8.3 million women, 2.9 million men).
- Memory loss is a serious issue for seniors. Approximately 5.1 million senior Americans have Alzheimer's disease today, and by 2030 that number is expected to increase by nearly 50% to 7.7 million.

The Patient Protection and Accountable Care Act of 2010 (PPACA) addresses this mounting healthcare crisis among senior citizens, most notably in Section 3022, which describes the establishment of "a shared savings program...that promotes accountability for a patient population and coordinates items and services under parts (Medicare) A and B, and encourages investment in infrastructure and redesigned care processes for high quality and efficient service delivery." Healthcare services for Medicare fee-for-service beneficiaries will be managed and coordinated through an accountable care organization. Other programs focused on Medicare recipients include Independence at Home Demonstration Program and the Hospital Readmission Reduction Program. Common objectives of these programs are to improve care coordination (especially across transitions in care settings) and care team collaboration. If successful, these programs will reduce emergency room visits and preventable hospitalization, prevent hospital readmissions, improve health outcomes, improve efficiency of care by reducing duplicative diagnostic and laboratory tests, reduce health costs, and improve beneficiary and family caregiver satisfaction.

When it comes to managing patients with chronic conditions, connected health IT has a clear role to play to promote wellness, improve patient outcomes, and reduce preventable readmissions. A wide range of personal health monitoring devices and services, medical alert systems, sensors, and mobile health applications are currently commercially available, and significant research and development efforts are under way across the spectrum of technology vendors. IDC Health Insights expects promising growth in 2011 for technologies and services that allow senior consumers to live independently at home, or as it is commonly referred to, age in place.

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