

TIM LYNCH

We appreciate the opportunity to be here today at the Georgia Belle Dickinson Apartments to release the findings of a significant new study. This is a fitting location because it is home to 150 seniors who are likely facing the same challenges that millions of seniors on fixed incomes across this country face... how to access the treatments and medications they need to maintain healthy and active lives.

Many of us have witnessed first-hand what happens to seniors when they wait too long to get help. It is a fact of life that as we age our need for health care services rises. But tragically, those who need services most all too often put off treatment until hospitalization is the only option.

We know that a third of America's seniors lack prescription drug coverage. This study documents the high cost of that problem.

The study looked at acute care hospital Medicare data for three chronic diseases affecting the elderly—diabetes, osteoporosis and depression.

All of these diseases are manageable if they are treated early... but too many Florida seniors are putting off treatment until their conditions are serious or even grave. Low-income seniors are particularly hard-hit because most don't have drug coverage or the resources to pay for the medications they need.

The cost in dollars and human terms is high.

Depression affects 15 of every 100 adults over 65 in the United States. That's more than 6 million Americans. When properly diagnosed and treated, 70 to 80 percent will recover and lead productive lives, but 15 percent of those with untreated depression ultimately commit suicide. Here in Florida, the study shows that

an estimated \$16 million in hospital costs could be saved if seniors had access to proper medication.

By the age of 75, one in five seniors have diabetes, affecting 17 million Americans. Diabetics are three times more likely than non-diabetics to require hospitalization. That's why early detection and treatment are so critical. Our study found that an estimated \$13 million of the \$50 million spent on hospitalization could have been saved if just *half* of the seniors studied had received early treatment.

The lifetime risk to seniors of developing osteoporosis is enormous. Nearly one in two women and one in five men will sustain fractures due to bone loss. Hip fractures alone amount to \$10 to \$14 billion in annual health care expenditures.

The study found that Medicare spent almost \$3.4 to hospitalize Florida seniors with osteoporosis. If the condition had been

detected and treated early, almost one third of those dollars could have been saved.

The bottom line? In our state alone, the potential Medicare savings for the small population of seniors studied is more than \$30 million. In the six states we studied, the estimated savings would be \$103 million. Nationally, that could translate to almost a half billion.

Savings like these could go a long way toward providing prescription drug benefits to the seniors who need it. But in the meantime, we must make seniors aware of the help that is **ALREADY** available to them. Now I'd like to ask Gail Cordial, manager of public affairs for Eli Lilly and Company, to come up and discuss one option available to seniors that could have avoided many of the expenditures we documented in this study.

Gail Cordial

I'm proud to be here today on behalf of Eli Lilly and Company, a leader in the development of medicines that help seniors as well as millions of other Americans maintain healthy and productive lives.

As a company, we recognize the vital role medicines play in our health care system and the need for a comprehensive prescription drug benefit for our seniors. But we also recognize the need for a short-term solution to help our neediest seniors.

LillyAnswers is a prescription drug assistance program available to Medicare-enrolled U. S. citizens 65 or older who have individual annual incomes below \$18,000 or household incomes below \$24,000. Seniors who qualify can access a 30-day supply of any retail drug made by Lilly for a flat fee of \$12 per prescription per month.

This program has been recognized by AARP, Gov. Jeb Bush, the Florida Nurses Association, the Florida Alliance for the Mentally Ill, the American Diabetes Association and other groups as one of the most credible, helpful programs of its kind.

Any yet, despite our best efforts to make the program known to seniors, only 9,500 of an estimated 300,000 eligible Floridians have enrolled to date.

We've made the process for applying as simple as possible. And we have worked with pharmacies across the state to accept the card. But we must raise awareness among seniors that Lilly Answers and programs like it are available or the high price – in dollars and suffering – paid by the seniors in Dr. Lynch's study will continue.

ELDER AFFAIRS REPRESENTATIVE

Many of our state's most vulnerable citizens are seniors ... and the Department of Elder Affairs is committed to ensuring that they are able to make the most of their golden years.

One of the ways we can do that is by ensuring that our state's elders have access to health care and medication. And there is good news on that front.

Gov. Bush recently announced the "Silver Savers" program, which doubles the current prescription drug benefit for low-income seniors.

And a number of pharmaceutical companies have also stepped forward with drug discount cards for low-income seniors.

Eli Lilly is one of them. I want to thank them for stepping forward with a program that will help low-income seniors access some of the leading medicines for treating osteoporosis, diabetes and depression. Through these kinds of programs, many seniors will be able to prevent the kind of serious health problems documented in this study.

SENATOR MITCHELL

I'm pleased to be here today. You know it's ironic... our country has one of the best health care systems in the world. And the outlook for living healthy, active lives well into our 80s has never been brighter. But as this study points out, the painful reality is that too many of our seniors are falling through the cracks because they don't have the resources to get the treatments they need.

This study underscores the urgent need for Congress to adopt a comprehensive prescription drug benefit in Medicare. The fact is, medicine has changed significantly since the Medicare program was established. Today, many illnesses can be prevented or managed with medicine, eliminating the need for some expensive surgeries and hospitalizations. But seniors need a reliable way to access medications. Without that, we will continue to squander our limited resources by paying for high cost emergency care and treatment.

Clearly we all have huge stake in seeing that our seniors remain healthy and vital. In just a few years, almost 1 in 4 Florida citizens will be over the age of 65. If we want to remain healthy as a state, it's imperative that we look out for the health and well-being of our older citizens now.

As I travel my district, I hear so many stories of adult children trying to help elderly parents make ends meet. And of proud seniors living on small pensions or social security, struggling mightily to remain independent and healthy. (TELL A PERSONAL STORY FROM YOUR DISTRICT).

I applaud Eli Lilly and the other companies who are proactively trying to help our neediest seniors while Congress is deliberating. It's critical that we keep Congress focused on providing drug benefits to seniors. By doing that, we will be making a critical investment in our country's future—an investment that will not only protect the quality of life for our grandmothers and

grandfathers, but for our mothers and fathers, and ultimately for ourselves.

