

Simple Steps To Better Health And Lower Health Care Costs

(NAPSA)—Cancer, diabetes and heart disease are among the potentially serious health problems that are often preventable. They can begin as minor health issues, the kind patients tend to ignore, and can turn serious if they go undetected and untreated. But by getting a regular physical exam, a physician can catch health problems early on, treating them with efficiency and accuracy to maintain overall health; and healthier people spend less money on health care. The American Medical Association (AMA) recommends the following preventive tests:

- Everyone should have a yearly physical exam, including blood pressure checks and lifestyle counseling regarding smoking, alcohol use, nutrition and exercise.

- Women should have yearly pelvic exams, usually starting at age 18. Additionally, women should have a yearly Pap smear once they are sexually active.

- Women should have yearly mammograms starting at age 40 or sooner if the patient has a family history of breast cancer.

- Men should have yearly colon and rectal exams starting at age 50.

- Men should have a prostate screening once a year starting at age 50.

In challenging economic times, some patients are forced to choose between paying for necessities like food and gas or seeing a physician when health problems first arise. Uninsured patients, in particular, tend to delay getting care until health problems reach crisis proportions, leading to more difficult and more costly conditions to treat. Delaying care and putting off preventive checkups or recommended screenings can have disastrous



A new AMA campaign is designed to ensure that all Americans have health care coverage so they can access preventive care to stay healthy and cut health care costs.

health consequences, according to J. James Rohack, M.D., AMA president-elect. “Patients without health insurance live sicker and die younger,” Dr. Rohack said. “Uninsured patients often do not have access to a physician or get the preventive care and tests needed to catch disease and sickness early. Many miss out on vaccinations that guard against preventable illnesses like the flu. And there’s little opportunity to talk to a doctor about the best ways to stay healthy.”

Currently, there are 46 million Americans living without health insurance, and that number could climb if the economy worsens. Dr. Rohack and the AMA are working to address the crisis of the uninsured through the AMA’s Voice for the Uninsured Campaign. The campaign is aimed at passing legislation to ensure all Americans have access to health insurance and the health benefits that go with it.

“Lack of health insurance is a curable condition,” Dr. Rohack said. “We need to make sure all our citizens are covered so they can live longer, healthier lives.” To learn more about the AMA’s campaign, visit www.voicefortheuninsured.org.