

Health Bulletin



How America Can Feel Great And Spend Less

(NAPSA)—New treatment methods have helped people with heart disease live more active and more healthy lives.

For example, today, Betty Sanks enjoys walking around her Brooklyn neighborhood. Two years ago, it was a different story. She could hardly climb the stairs or walk around the block because of her heart disease.

Fortunately, Sanks received one of the most advanced heart disease treatments available—a minimally invasive procedure called intravascular radiation. The simple, 40-minute treatment changed her life.

Fifty years ago, people with Sanks' condition were not as fortunate. Those surviving heart attacks were sent home to bed and an uncertain future. Even in the early 1990s, the only option to treat diseased arteries was a risky open heart surgery. The surgery required at least a nine day hospital stay and a month's recovery time at home.

The benefits of new medical technologies, however, extend beyond good health. They help keep healthcare costs down as well.

A recent study found that thanks in part to new technology, there are 2.4 million fewer disabled seniors today than was projected.

The decline in disability means big savings for Medicare. The researchers reported that today's healthier seniors help Medicare save over \$19 billion in annual nursing costs alone. Over the next few decades, these savings could completely offset the increasing costs of America's aging population, say experts.

Less invasive treatments play a big part in the new Medicare savings. For example, balloon angioplasty for opening clogged



New medical technology helps save Medicare billions of dollars annually.

arteries costs just over \$20,000, while open heart surgery costs just under \$50,000.

Similarly, technologies such as telemedicine, that let doctors monitor and even treat patients in a different location, promise to cut costs and increase the time healthcare professionals can spend with patients, doctors say. Telemedicine costs \$30 a day, while nursing care costs about \$100 a day and some hospitals cost over \$800 daily.

An additional study found medical advances can be healthy for the economy as well. The study reported the benefits of advanced medical techniques in just two areas—infant mortality and improved heart attack treatment—are so great they “alone are about equal to the entire cost increase of medical care over time.”

People can improve their odds of living longer, healthier lives by making sure doctors give them the most advanced tests and treatments available. When doctors use new technology, they are not just keeping patients healthy, they're reducing healthcare costs and giving the economy a shot in the arm as well.