



SPOTLIGHT ON HEALTH



Reducing Care Costs For The Chronically Ill

(NAPSA)—Experts say that chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and asthma are reaching record levels in the U.S., with a national cost of over \$325 billion. While many of these diseases can be prevented or controlled, patients don't always have the information or support they need to keep themselves healthy.

As a result, over time their condition may deteriorate. Often, they end up relying on expensive health care resources, such as emergency rooms.

An innovative program in Florida is helping patients take charge of their health. Launched in 2001 as a partnership between the state of Florida and Pfizer Inc, "Florida: A Healthy State" provides patient education and one-on-one support to Medicaid patients with chronic diseases, teaching them to be more active in managing their health.

The initiative, which operates through a statewide network of community hospitals and over 350 civic organizations and advocacy groups, employs specially trained care managers who work directly with patients. These care managers make housecalls and are available 24 hours a day to answer their patients' questions and offer support and encouragement.

That type of patient-centered care is not only improving the



An innovative program in Florida offering people with chronic illnesses education and support may be one way to reduce health care costs.

health of these Floridians, but is also saving the state money. In conjunction with funding and donated medicines from Pfizer, Florida's Medicaid agency recently reported that the program has saved the state more than \$61 million over the past two years by reducing emergency room visits and hospital admissions. In addition, nearly 150,000 Floridians with chronic conditions are better prepared to take charge of their own health. In a recent survey, 92 percent of patients said the program improved their understanding of their disease.

The "Healthy State" program, which 92 percent of respondent patients said improved their understanding of their disease, is also being looked at by other states as a way to improve health and reduce costs.

To learn more, visit www.floridaahealthystate.com.