SENIORS NEED TO KNOW

BY IRWIN A. HERMAN, MD

Here it is, another year has ended, and I, like most people will think about it and say, "where did it go?"

It has been an interesting year for seniors, for health care, for politics and for environmental issues, and we seem to be weathering the storm fairly well so far. I thought I'd share some bits and pieces of random thoughts to give you a little rest from the heavy-duty medical subjects we consider.

At a meeting of the Area 4 Agency on Aging (A4AA) the other day, it was reported that there are over 6,000 Centenarians in California today and 57,000 in the country! An astounding number when I still remember that when someone reached the amazing age of 100, it was a front page news article and it came with a birthday message from the President. Now, it seems to be a humdrum event. Some of you may recall that when FDR signed the Social Security program into law in August, 1935 it was estimated that the average benefit recipient would live for three and one half years beyond age 65 and therefore the Social Security Trust Fund which was funded by a greater number of workers, would last forever. So much for estimates, but who would want to go back to those projections? No one that I know of.

When Medicare was signed into law by LBJ in July, 1965, almost exactly 30 years later, that same generation of which most of us are members became the beneficiaries of one of the major contributors to the growth of an aging population, who not only lived longer, but healthier as well. And, if the Affordable Care Act survives the political battle, our children and grandchildren hopefully will have the same benefit as well.

As I look outside on this late December day and see all of my spring blooming varieties of daffodils in full bloom 3 months early, I tend to believe that there is a warming trend on the planet, whether man made or not, and then I wonder how is this going to affect my lifestyle if it continues? And will there be a health effect as well, and if so, will it be for the good or not? Too much for my feeble brain to ponder now, but I hope some of the younger folks will ponder if for me.

While I'm still licensed by the State of California to practice medicine as a volunteer, I do have to stay current on my continuing medical education with on line courses. It is these courses that I find mind-boggling at times when they discuss some of the new technology and genetic manipulations on the horizon, some of which are in place right now. It's like Buck Rogers come to life when I think of how this will more affect the next generation as it becomes commonplace in the health care delivery system. Probably the earliest group to see the benefits will be the "Boomers" as they are now reaching the age when degenerative and debilitating changes begin to accelerate. Eight to ten thousand of these Boomers are reaching Medicare age every day now, and that will continue for many years! The overwhelming question at present is who will be the payers to support these numbers from here on? It's a

burning social issue that has been festering for a few years now, with no agreement on how to deal with it. Time is surely running out for a solution to be developed.

Finally, I wonder how many of you know about the various agencies in our area that are looking out for senior issues and advocating for a safer and healthier environment for our generation. There are at present 3 major groups that you ought to be aware of.

The Roseville Senior Commission (RSC): this body advocates to the City of Roseville Council for issues affecting primarily residents of Roseville. Currently, it is working on a project developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) called **Age Friendly Cities**, of which there are at last count 39 worldwide. This is a five year program to create a safe, welcoming, healthy and inclusive environment for those aged 60 and over to comfortably enjoy in their later years.

The Placer County Older Adult Advisory Commission (OAAC): this commission serves at the pleasure of the Board of Supervisors (BOS) and is under the supervision of the Public Health Department headed by Dr. Richard Burton. This commission advocates for funding and support from the BOS for the various senior related public service departments in the county. They also help develop a Needs Assessment review to determine the best use of public funds to provide the different available services.

The Area 4 Agency on Aging (A4AA): this is a joint federal/state body composed of members from the seven regional counties in our area who receive funding from the government that support the various agencies such as Meals on Wheels, Ombudsman program and HIPAC to name a few, and then determine the distribution of these funds to the different counties. The agency is a part of the OLDER AMERICANS ACT, the major senior support system in the country.

You can "Google" each of them for further information. And with that I will leave you with a wish for a healthy and happy 2013 and fulfillment of all your dreams.

Dr. Irwin A. Herman is a member of the Placer OAAC. As one of our regular contributors, the opinions expressed in this article are Dr. Herman's.

The Older Adult Advisory Commission is responsible for advising the Department of Health and Human Services and the Board of Supervisors on the needs of Placer County's older adults. Meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday at 1:00 PM. More information may be found online at:

http://www.placer.ca.gov/Departments/hhs/adult/OlderAdultAdvisoryCommission.aspx or by calling the Public Authority at (530) 886-3680.