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JANUARY 12, 2015

The American nursing home – Another infrastructure problem that continues to be ignored

 November 26, 2014 by [stevenyoder](#)  [Leave a Comment](#)



A picture of the new nursing home in Crisfield, Maryland, with the older nursing home standing in front of it. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

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The American Society of Civil Engineers' quadriennial report card on the condition of America's roads, bridges, and dams gets a lot of attention, especially when the grade is bad, as has been the case [of late](#). (Last year, ASCE gave it a D+.)

But ASCE doesn't rate performance on a key infrastructural component that most Americans won't care about until they're older: our nursing homes. As the older U.S. population balloons, it's an area in which the latest data [continue to point](#) to a deteriorating situation.

The first Baby Boomers hit age 65 in 2011, and the effects will be felt for years to come. The proportion of those 65 and older in the U.S. population will grow from about 13 percent in 2010 to about 19 percent by 2030—in raw numbers, that means an increase from 40 million to more than 70 million people, a 75-percent jump. In that same period, the number 85 and older will grow by about 50 percent. “In the next two decades, the U.S. health care system will face a tidal wave of aging Baby Boomers,” reads a recent [report](#) by the Bipartisan Policy Center. “This, among many other factors, will create an unsustainable demand for [long-term services and supports] in the coming years.”

And while most people would rather get care at home, trends show that more of us will need nursing homes down the road. For example, the percentage of people with two or more chronic conditions like cancer, heart disease, and high blood pressure increased from 37 to 45 percent from 2000 to 2010, according to a 2012 [report](#) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Those are health outcomes that typically land people in nursing homes after a hospital stay.

But the number of nursing homes is actually falling—it's dropped by 4 percent from 2003 to 2012, according to the most recent data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The number of beds per population of those over 65 has fallen even further, down 18 percent in that same period.

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That's because many nursing homes are losing money, in large part because they're providing Medicaid-covered long-term care services to their residents but aren't being paid for the full value of those services. (Medicaid is paid for jointly by the federal and state governments and covers the cost of long-term care for chronically or terminally ill patients who have run out of money.)

In 2013, nursing homes lost a total of \$7.7 billion in unreimbursed Medicaid costs on those patients. On average, they lose more than \$24 per Medicaid patient per day, up from about \$9 per day in 1999, according to a report this January from the American Health Care Association, which represents nursing homes.

That means a home with 63 patients funded under Medicaid loses \$550,000 on those patients. Worse, nursing homes in poorer areas tend to have a far higher proportion of those Medicaid patients—meaning that homes in the worst-off areas are the most likely to close their doors.

In Massachusetts, four nursing homes have [shut down](#) this year and more than 50 over the last 10 years, citing Medicaid reimbursement rates as the reason. More than 50 homes have closed in that state over the last 10 years. The daughter of one 94-year-old resident of one of the closed homes was told that she had three weeks to find a new facility for her mother. Widespread waiting lists have been reported in places as diverse as Tallahassee in Florida, Rapid City in South Dakota, and San Francisco.

One solution that states increasingly are turning to is using Medicaid to paying for people to get long-term care at home since it's far cheaper than in a nursing home.

But getting care at home isn't an option for many patients, especially the oldest and sickest. Some of those with disabilities need 24-hour supervision—for example, those older than age 65 who have dementia, those with HIV/AIDS, those who are on ventilators, or those with head trauma. More than 17 percent of Americans older than

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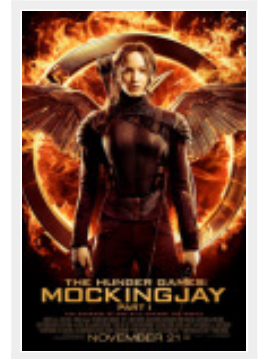
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December 4, 2014

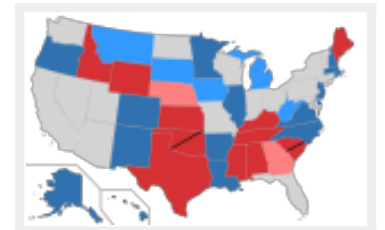
By Joan Oleck – The Hunger Games:

Mockingjay—Part 1

is, for its teen fan base, a powerful lesson in marketing manipulation. For anyone not living in a cave, this third film in the series of four is based on the über-successful book series by Suzanne Collins and weaves a compelling tale of teen survival in [...]



Commentary: The 2014 US Midterms – The democratic election that wasn't



age 85 live in nursing homes, and about half of all of those who turn 65 will enter a nursing home at some point.

Nursing home advocates say that the care their facilities provide is a public good and should be treated as an investment like roads, bridges, and power lines—that without higher reimbursement rates, nursing homes will crumble like other components of U.S. infrastructure. Failing that, homes in marginal neighborhoods will continue to close, and the survivors will be available only to those who can afford them. Only a third of U.S. adults older than age 65 have more than \$70,000 in assets, and the cost of 1 month's stay in a nursing home runs at least \$6000. That could mean a lot of older Baby Boomers could be left to fend for themselves when they someday need skilled nursing care.

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November 11, 2014

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October 31, 2014

As Myanmar, a country with an incipient democracy and alarming human rights record, prepares to host a prestigious regional issues summit in coming weeks, the Southeast Asian nation's galling treatment of its ethnic minority populations is receiving renewed attention. It's an inopportune time for the country's president, Thein Sein, for these issues to be resurfacing in [...]

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outrage over
Brunei's strict
Islamic
criminal
code all
but gone**



October 18, 2014

When Brunei became the first Southeast Asian country to nationally adopt a strict Islamic penal code known as Sharia earlier this year, the world was outraged. News and social media told us so in such headlines as “Brunei adopts sharia law amid international outcry” and “Ellen DeGeneres backs boycott of Brunei-owned hotels over ‘stone the [...]”

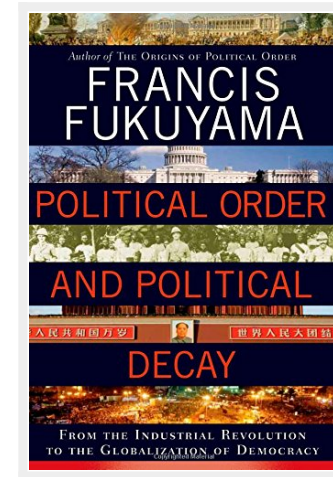
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