

## **The Age Wave and Alzheimer's Disease**

The following is a brief report on a presentation by Ken Dychtwald at the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual National Association of Home Care Annual Conference in Denver, October 8-11, 2007. Dychtwald reported tht the two interlocking factors most strongly influencing the U.S. society and economy in the decades ahead will be the increase in longevity and the continuing rise in demand for health care because of that increase in longevity coupled with the numbers in people, the Boomers.

There are 76 million Baby Boomers born between 1946 and 1964. The boomers pay 60% of all taxes in the U.S. and make the greatest amount of contributions to charities and volunteer services of any age group. However, as the Boomers age, our nation will face issues never before faced in such numbers.

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Dychtwald noted that advances in medical diagnostics -- as well as drugs, surgical techniques and nutrition -- have eliminated many of the problems that not long ago caused people to die prematurely. But the irony of our success, he adds, "is that many more long-lived elders suffer from heart disease, cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis, and Alzheimer's -- illnesses that our expensive medical system is not very good at preventing or treating."

Currently, 47% of people aged over 85 suffer from some form of dementia. Alzheimer's has been referred to as "the elderly AIDS" and could become the scourge of the 21st century. If a cure or treatment is not found within our lifetimes, 15 million boomers will be stricken with dementia in the very middle of this century, and tens of millions of their adult children will be called on to help provide care.