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Partnership for Prevention Offers Health Reform Recommendations to Congress

Cover more clinical preventive services, dedicate funding source to public health

WASHINGTON, D.C., Dec. 11, 2008 – Partnership for Prevention today unveiled health reform recommendations to Congress that would strengthen disease prevention and health promotion efforts to tackle the chronic diseases that are causing medical costs to spiral.

Under these proposals, federally funded insurance programs would provide highly cost-effective clinical preventive services with no deductibles or co-pays, while Congress would provide incentives to states, health care providers and employers to deliver such services. Meanwhile, a stand-alone revenue source would be established to fund state and local efforts to create healthy environments and promote healthy lifestyles, while a Public Health Advisory Commission would be created to recommend how that funding should be allocated. The complete list of recommendations is available online at: www.prevent.org/HealthReform.

“Giving all Americans access to quality, affordable medical care will not by itself rein in the ballooning health care costs that threaten to overwhelm our government and our economy,” Corinne G. Husten MD, Partnership’s interim president, said at a policy forum on health reform. “We must address the drivers of those costs and do more to keep people healthy.

“Real health reform must start with prevention,” she said. “Without a much stronger emphasis on prevention than now exists, we have little hope of controlling costs without sacrificing health.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and diabetes account for about 75 percent of the nation’s aggregate health care spending - or about \$5,300 per person in the U.S. each year.

Partnership’s recommendations focus on three areas: increased utilization of clinical preventive services, promotion of community preventive services, and increasing the impact of prevention through research and performance measurement.

The recommendation to cover preventive services in federally sponsored health insurance programs would apply to Medicare, Medicaid, the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration, as well as the private-sector health insurance offerings included in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program. The covered services would be those

recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

The newly created Public Health Advisory Commission would also recommend strategies to hold the public health system accountable for achieving the “Healthy People” health goals sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Partnership also recommends increased investment in research on effective clinical and community preventive services, as well as improved data systems to monitor progress in meeting Healthy People goals.

Partnership’s recommendations were drawn from a series of policy papers commissioned from leading national public health authorities. The papers cover such diverse topics as modernizing Medicare to improve the delivery of preventive services, determining the content of a package of preventive services, linking the clinical care and public health systems, strengthening the role of the nation’s public health system, reorganizing the Department of Health and Human Services, and expanding worksite health promotion programs.

The authors of the papers include: Kurt Stange, professor of family medicine, epidemiology & biostatistics, and sociology and oncology at Case Western Reserve University; Steven Woolf, professor at the departments of family medicine, epidemiology and community health at Virginia Commonwealth University; Douglas Kamerow, chief scientist at RTI; Jonathan Fielding, Los Angeles County ‘s Director of Health; Ron Goetzel, Director of Emory University’s Institute for Health and Productivity Studies; Arkansas Surgeon General Joe Thompson, and Larry Lewin, health consultant and founder of The Lewin Group. All of the papers are available at www.prevent.org/HealthReform.

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Partnership for Prevention is a membership organization of businesses, nonprofit organizations and government agencies advancing policies and practices to prevent disease and improve the health of all Americans. For more information, please visit www.prevent.org.