More Companies Open In-House Health Clinics

To cope with the national epidemic of chronic disease, more and more companies are setting up in-house health clinics staffed with doctors and nurses, while many existing clinics are increasing the services they provide to include dentistry and management of such diseases as diabetes. American Express, for example, has 15 wellness centers and reports a decrease in employee weight and tobacco use. A study by the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine found that companies get a return of $1.50 to $3 for every dollar spent on these in-house programs. Companies will pay an average of $11,664 per employee in 2012 for health care costs, up 5.9% over last year, according to a Towers Watson/NBGH survey.

Chelsea Emery | “The doctor (in the next cubicle) will see you now” | Reuters | October 9, 2012
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MetLife Study: Single People Feeling Financial Pressure

More than their coupled neighbors, the fast-growing 31 million single-person households in the U.S. are feeling a strain on their finances, leading to greater stress about paying for health care and other living expenses and about saving for retirement, according to a new study from the MetLife Mature Market Institute and the Society of Actuaries. Overall, 53% of those surveyed worried about keeping up with living expenses, a particular concern of the single-person households. Fifty-four percent of respondents feared that changes to Social Security and Medicare would reduce their retirement resources. The study also offered a number of health care and retirement strategies tailored to both couples and single-person households.

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Davey Johnson’s Mental Triple Play

Davey Johnson is a poster boy for the new scientific view that the brain, like a muscle, can be strengthened at any age with the right kind of exercise. As the 69-year-old manager of the Washington Nationals, he has guided his D.C. team to an unprecedented division title. He's also a computer programmer and real estate developer, constantly challenging himself to learn new and different things. That kind of exercise, scientists say, beefs up the brain’s mental capacity. Johnson’s rigorous physical workouts and his continuous social engagement with his players are two other types of “exercise” that, researchers believe, improve brain health.

Patrick Hruby  |  “Nationals’ manager Davey Johnson maintains sharp mental edge”  |  The Washington Times  |  October 2, 2012

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More Americans Plan to Retire Overseas

Attracted in particular by a lower cost of living, growing numbers of Americans are choosing to retire abroad. Many of them are among the 350,000 retirees now receiving their Social Security benefits overseas, and Travel Market Report estimates that 3.3 million U.S. Baby Boomers are planning to spend their sunset years out of the country. Faced by steadily rising domestic health care costs, they focus on nations that offer government-subsidized health plans. They also may look upon residing abroad as a post-retirement, last great adventure. But experts warn that, as people age, the lure of adventure can give way to homesickness for loved ones and familiar settings.

“What’s Driving Americans to Retire Abroad? Money – or Lack of It”  |  Knowledge@Wharton  |  July 18, 2012

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Older Women Workers Capture More Jobs

While unemployment has racked the labor force in general, two unlikely groups have been capturing more and more jobs: women between 65 and 74 years of age and women who are 75 and older. They are, in fact, the fastest-growing worker cohorts in the country. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that between 2008 and 2018, 65- to 74-year-old women workers, for example, will increase in number by about 90%. A Sloan Center national survey of retired professional women found that most of those who were still on the job were not in financial need and were primarily motivated by a love of their work.

Elizabeth F. Fideler  |  “Women Working Late”  |  Sloan Center on Aging & Work, Boston College  |  September 5, 2012

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90%

Estimated percentage of increase in 65- to 74-year-old women workers between 2008 and 2018
Many Family Caregivers Perform Medical Tasks

Contrary to the common perception that family caregiving primarily consists of routine household chores, a national survey has found that 46% of the nation’s 42 million unpaid family caregivers perform medical and nursing tasks. The survey by the United Hospital Fund and the AARP learned that three out of four of those providing medical and nursing care took charge of their family member’s medications, including IVs and injections, while more than a third had managed their loved one’s wounds. The report recommends that the health care profession should make sure family caregivers are properly trained for such tasks.

Susan C. Reinhard, Carol Levine, and Sarah Samis | “Home Alone: Family Caregivers Providing Complex Chronic Care” | United Hospital Fund
Click for link to article

International Ageing*: Japan

Japan has the world’s longest life expectancy and its largest public debt as well as a low birthrate — a combination that could easily bankrupt the nation’s pension system except for one thing: the eagerness of its elderly citizens to keep working beyond retirement age. Old-age pensions there start at the age of 60. Japan has 5.7 million people older than 65 still in the workforce, proportionately more than any other developed nation. On average, men leave the labor market at age 70, and women at 67. As in the U.S., the Japanese government has sought to raise the retirement age to further encourage older people to stay on the job.

Kanoko Matsuyama | “Wrinkled Workers Help Defuse Japan’s Pension Time Bomb” | Bloomberg.com | August 26, 2012
Click for link to article

Creativity Equals Longevity

Recent studies have found that openness — a personality trait that encompasses mental flexibility, a willingness to entertain new ideas, and creativity — is good for your health in general. But to improve your survival rate, according to new research from Purdue University, you need to focus on the creativity element of openness. The researchers discovered that in a sample of older men, only greater creativity predicted longer survival, demonstrating its protective role even at an advanced age. Experts also believe that creative people tend to be less stressed when presented with an emotional or physical problem because they see it as a challenge to be overcome rather than an unyielding obstacle.

Tori Rodriguez | “Creativity Predicts a Longer Life” | Scientific American | September 9, 2012
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A Mini Retirement Home in the Backyard

The vast majority of older people want to age in their own homes, but often their homes are too difficult or expensive to maintain or too far from the helping hands of family members. One solution: small, self-contained, elder-friendly structures that can be attached to a family member’s house or set up a few feet away. A freestanding unit now on the market includes such safety features as soft floors, health monitoring equipment, and a runway mat from bed to bathroom that lights up when stepped on. Another product has motion detectors that turn on a night-light system automatically. Basic units cost from $67,000 to $85,000.

Susan Seliger | “In the Backyard, Grandma’s New Apartment” | The New York Times | May 1, 2012
Click for link to article

Web Watch: Hearing Loss Is a Family Affair

The National Council on Aging has created a web page to serve individuals with age-related hearing loss as well as their families. It includes a moving and informative video that emphasizes the difficulty some people have in recognizing or acknowledging the problem and the negative impact hearing loss can have on family relationships. James Firman, the NCOA president, describes on the video how hearing aids have improved his own family and professional life. The site also discusses the causes of hearing loss and how to cope with it and offers a downloadable brochure with frequently asked questions about the ailment.

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