



I have followed the *Washington Post's* recent coverage (You're only as secure as the retirement home, October 31, 2009) on the challenges facing Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs) with a great deal of interest. While, I agree seniors must pay attention to detail in the process of selecting a community fitting their social and medical needs, I found that the articles focused on isolated financial issues of certain communities and not the overall benefits of the continuing care model, under which many seniors thrive.

Since its inception, the continuing care model has demonstrated clear advantages to seniors and society as a whole. In most cases, seniors flourish in communities that combine social interaction with healthcare services. The wide range of services offered, including preventative healthcare, remove many burdens of daily living and enrich the overall quality of life of seniors. Studies demonstrate CCRC residents are generally healthier from a physical and mental standpoint and require less hospitalization when compared with non-CCRC residents of corresponding ages.

Furthermore, such communities empower seniors to take responsibility for their long-term care needs, utilizing their own resources rather than drawing from public healthcare options. The continuing care model is and will remain a pivotal component in controlling the anticipated growth in Medicare and Medicaid, crucial public programs with diminishing resources.

Even with the struggling economy, the vast majority of CCRCs are financially stable and maintain occupancy rates approaching 90%. From a long-term perspective, over the past 20 years only 2 percent of communities have experienced financial problems resulting in insolvency or bankruptcy. In addition, most states have enacted laws and regulations that govern the financial operations of CCRCs, mandating sufficient reserves and standards for investment of entrance deposits specifically designed to protect residents.

Given the current state of the national economy, one would be hard pressed to find any industry not adversely impacted by the downturn, especially one tied directly to the real estate sector. Despite the few instances of financial difficulty we currently witness, evidence clearly shows that the continuing care model works. The benefits of CCRCs are apparent: reduced public healthcare spending through Medicare and Medicaid and healthier seniors.

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