

Twin Cities Campus

Center on Aging

Minnesota Area Geriatric Education Center

*Mayo Mail Code 197
420 Delaware Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455*

*Office Location:
D-351 Mayo Memorial Building
612-624-1185
Fax: 612-624-8448
www.coa.umn.edu
Email: coa@umn.edu*

February 9, 2015

Representative Nick Zerwas
433 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representative Zerwas:

I am writing in my capacity as the director of the University of Minnesota Center on Aging to support passage of the CARE Act. I have been studying care for older persons for four decades. The very fact that such a bill is needed speaks volumes about the failure of our current health system. Patients and their families need to be well informed about what is needed when they leave a hospital. A hurried set of instructions as the patient is wheeled down the hospital corridor in a high state of anxiety is not good teaching. Likewise patients and their families need to know what is happening during a hospitalization in order to make informed decisions and to be alert for problems in care.

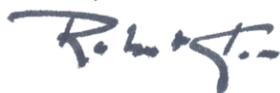
Hospital discharge has long been recognized as a dangerous time. Efforts to promote better transitional care to assure that care is maintained after discharge have been shown to be effective. Ironically, hospitals already have an incentive to improve post-hospital care because Medicare penalizes them for high rates of readmissions.

Developing effective family and patient discharge education may cost the hospitals, but it will also help avoid costly penalties. In either event, it is just good care. Giving families access to medical record information is consistent with the widely espoused concept of patient-centered care.

The CARE Act should be viewed as just a beginning. Older patients and their families need better structure and support (and time) to make thoughtful discharge plans. The idea that they can come up with a thoughtful post-discharge plan that has the best chance of providing the older person with the most appropriate care in less than a day is ludicrous, but families are expected to do just that every day. We seem doomed to being penny wise and pound foolish. We allow weak programs that lead to subsequent expensive care and then wonder why we are in the position we find ourselves.

Please do the right thing. Support the CARE Act. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Kane, MD
Professor