



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Reducing Chronic Diseases Critical to Economic Recovery and Health Reform**

Washington, D.C. (May 14, 2009) – An obese 70-year-old will spend approximately 20 percent more on health care over their lifetime – nearly \$40,000 – than a peer of normal weight, according to the second annual *Almanac of Chronic Disease*, released today by the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease (PFCD).

The *Almanac* is a comprehensive resource that outlines the critical role that preventing and reducing chronic diseases can have on health care reform, economic stability and the health of all Americans. Research highlights from the *Almanac's* include:

- During 2007, the U.S. spent an estimated \$1.7 trillion treating patients with one or more chronic conditions – the equivalent of 34 million annual salaries of \$50,000.
- Since the mid-1980s, about two-thirds of the increase in spending on health care in the United States is linked to the rise in the prevalence of treated chronic diseases; about one-third is linked to the doubling of obesity rates.
- Chronic disease and treatment rates are higher in the United States than in other industrialized nations, and may add as much as \$100 to \$150 billion in treatment costs to U.S. health spending.

“We need to address the sad reality that 75 cents of every dollar we spend on health care in our nation is to treat people suffering from a chronic disease,” said PFCD National Chairperson Richard H. Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., FACS, 17<sup>th</sup> U.S. Surgeon General (2002-2006), President of the non-profit Canyon Ranch Institute. “The scientific evidence in the *Almanac* is clear. The health of our nation and our economy will only improve when we move from a ‘sick-care’ system focused on treating chronic diseases to a true health care system devoted to prevention and wellness. The hundreds of PFCD partners who come from all sectors of American society are leading the way toward making the prevention of chronic diseases a national priority.”

At the press conference, Carmona, who is also Distinguished Professor of Public Health at the University of Arizona, was joined by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), a senior member of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) who leads the Prevention and Public Health Working Group, Kenneth Thorpe, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease and Professor and Chair of the Department of Health Policy and Management at the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University and Virginia Wangerin, R.N., M.S.N., President of the Iowa Nurses Association.

“We have heard millions of voices across the nation, by way of the President’s forums on health reform and other public events, calling for immediate action to resolve our economic challenges and improve health care in America,” said Thorpe. “What the *Almanac* shows is that without reducing and better managing our country’s chronic disease rates and changing our delivery system from a treatment-oriented system to a prevention-oriented one, any short-term economic or health reform action will result in long-term failure.”



In addition to the hundreds of charts and statistics included in the *Almanac*, the publication also includes commentary from sponsoring organizations and excerpts from statements by national leaders in the areas of chronic disease, prevention and health care reform.

“Unless we can realign our health care incentives to encourage preventive care and better disease management, our current course of ‘inaction’ will soon cause irreparable damage to our nation’s economic viability and the strength of our greatest national asset: the health and wellbeing of the American people,” Thorpe continued. “As we enter into a critical phase of the health reform discussion, lawmakers and the public should be aware of the desperate need to address this issue and the commitment of diverse stakeholders, like the PFCD, to see successful reform around chronic disease prevention and management.”

The *Almanac* was co-sponsored by several PFCD partner organizations: American Academy of Nursing; Canyon Ranch Institute; DMAA: The Care Continuum Alliance; National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD); National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems; Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA); U.S. Chamber of Commerce; and YMCA of the USA.

For more information on the PFCD and to view a copy of the *Almanac of Chronic Disease* please visit [www.fightchronicdisease.org/](http://www.fightchronicdisease.org/) .

**About the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease:**

The Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease (PFCD) is a national coalition of patients, providers, community organizations, business and labor groups, and health policy experts committed to raising awareness of the number one cause of death, disability, and rising health care costs in the U.S.: chronic disease. For more information about the PFCD and its partner organizations, please visit: <http://www.fightchronicdisease.org>.

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