MARCH 2020

Medicare for all? For some? For none?

Medicare reform is on the agenda of most candidates running for election this fall as well as that of the incumbent president. In UMRA’s March forum presentation, Jon Christianson, PhD, will discuss some of the unique characteristics of the existing Medicare program, point out differences in proposals now on the table, and assess their implications. He will argue that addressing the large number of problems in existing Medicare should be a critical component in any effort to expand the program.

Christianson is a professor in the University of Minnesota School of Public Health Division of Health Policy and Management, and has held the James A. Hamilton Chair in Health Management since 1998. He received his bachelor’s degree in mathematics and economics at St. Olaf College and his master’s degree and PhD, both in economics, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

He is widely recognized for his experience in conducting large evaluations, particularly projects that combine qualitative and quantitative data, and evaluation and analysis at the community systems level.

The author of 10 books and more than 200 journal articles and book chapters, Christianson served from 1998 to 2000 on the Institute of Medicine committee that produced the report, To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System.

Expertise in health care markets

Christianson’s expertise is in aging, chronic diseases, management and economics, competitive health care markets, health insurance, and financial incentives in health care. His current research interests include the public reporting of provider performance, employer strategies for purchasing health care, implementation of evidence-based treatment processes in health care organizations, and tracking change in health care markets.

Christianson regularly teaches graduate courses on health and health systems and private purchasers of health care. He is a holder of major National Institutes of Health grants and serves as a community member on the University of Minnesota Physicians (M Physicians) Board of Directors. He has also served as a member and vice chairman of the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, or MedPAC, which advises Congress on Medicare issues.

Join us for what promises to be a timely presentation on a subject that is of vital importance to all of us, and to our country as a whole.

—Frank Cerra, president-elect and chair, Program Committee

Come at 10:30 for coffee and conversation

Thanks to the Campus Club, the West Wing Dining Room is available to UMRA members and guests for coffee and conversation before our monthly luncheons. There is no charge and no need to RSVP.
FROM THE PRESIDENT

A wonderful year with more to come
Welcome to Spring at the University. High school teams are back on campus and the Twins are in Florida. We will be wearing shorts in no time.

UMRA has had a good year so far with more to come. We met the University’s new president, got to know a couple of new regents, and partied in December. We then expressed our optimism about the U in a commentary published by MinnPost. On March 2 we held a panel on immigration, and we have three great forum speakers coming up for March, April, and May: Jon Christensen, a health economist; Minneapolis Chief of Police Medaria Arradondo; and Myron Franz, Minnesota Commissioner of Management and Budget. Our monthly workshops have been wonderful.

If you have suggestions for programming, please let me or Frank Cerra, chair of the Program Committee, know.

Thanks to board member Cherie Hamilton, UMRA members will soon be embarking on our first travel program through Road Scholar. And thanks to board member and secretary Lynn Anderson, many of our members are already experiencing worldwide travel through quarterly Armchair Traveler sessions.

A reminder: The University is transitioning the administration of retirement funds to Fidelity in the next few weeks. The University and Fidelity are currently holding seminars and one-on-one consultations. You can find information online at z.umn.edu/transitions-events and attend a seminar or set up a consultation. If you still have questions you can call Fidelity at 800-343-0860.

Finally, I want to thank Frank Cerra for taking over as president while I was gone in January. He did a fabulous job and it is clear he will be a great president next year.

I was in Madagascar and South Africa seeing and learning about lemurs, chameleons, and baobab trees. Known locally as “mother of the forest,” the baobab is a unique and ancient tree. See me if you want to see pictures of the Avenue of the Baobabs in Madagascar — or pictures of lions, elephants, and giraffes.

It is great to be back.
—Bill Donohue, president

March workshop: Protecting your online presence
Are you concerned about the safety of all your digital data? If not, you should be. The world is awash with people who want your data and want to do bad things with it.

UMRA’s March 24 workshop will provide an overview of cyber threats and best practices for protecting ourselves from them. We will learn how to guard against fraudulent email scams, malware, ransomware and malicious websites; what two-factor authentication is; how to create strong passwords and manage passwords; and where to find additional resources online.

Jenny Blaine, our workshop presenter, is a security analyst at University Information Security. She has been working in information security for more than 11 years. She is certified in Information Security, Windows Memory Forensics, and Security Incident Handling, and is a member of the U’s security incident response team.

Using tools for e-discovery, log analysis, and memory forensics, Blaine works with law enforcement, the Office of Internal Audit, and the Office of the General Counsel on cyber investigations at the University.

Join us for what promises to be an eye-opening and valuable workshop starting at 1:30 p.m. in the Dale Shephard Room on the 4th floor of the Campus Club.

—Ron Matross, chair, Workshop Committee

SECURE Act changes
On January 1, 2020, the Setting Every Community Up for Retirement Enhancement (SECURE) Act took effect, which resulted in a number of changes for retirement accounts, including the following:

Required minimum distribution (RMD) changes
The SECURE Act increases the age at which people must begin taking RMDs from their retirement accounts from 70½ to 72. If you did not turn 70 ½ on or before December 31, 2019, you will not have to begin taking your RMDs until age 72.

Note: This does NOT change the age at which an individual may make a tax-advantaged charitable gift (a qualified charitable distribution) from an IRA. That age is still 70½.
Changes to non-spouse withdrawal options
Under the previous law, when an IRA owner died the IRA beneficiary typically could “stretch” distributions over their lifetime. This enabled IRA beneficiaries to defer the income tax on an inherited account (other than the tax due on annual RMDs) throughout their lifetimes.

The SECURE Act modified the stretch IRA provisions. Under the new law:
• Spouses may still stretch payments over their lifetimes.
• Non-spouse beneficiaries must withdraw all the money in the IRA within 10 years of the account owner’s death (with several exceptions).

Please consult a professional advisor to learn how these and other provisions of the SECURE Act may affect you.

For questions, or to learn more about tax advantaged charitable giving options, contact the University of Minnesota Foundation Planned Giving staff at plgiving@umn.edu or 612-624-3333.

Important notice regarding transition to Fidelity
In addition to reviewing your investments during the transition in retirement plans from Securian to Fidelity, it is important to review and update your beneficiary designations. While some designations may transfer from former accounts, there are some circumstances where they will not; for example, when accounts are merged or required information is missing.

Please review and update your retirement account beneficiary designations during the Early Choice Window (until March 20) and again after the transfer to make sure the designations match your wishes.

—Lynn Praska, senior planned giving officer, UMF

Welcome new members to UMRA
Please give a hearty welcome to 12 new members who joined UMRA between mid-January and early February. Encourage anyone you know to attend our monthly meetings, greet all newcomers, and help introduce them to other members.

• Kathleen Conners, Humphrey School of Public Affairs
• Ann Garwick (and Dave Garwick), School of Nursing
• Vicki Gaylord, College of Education and Human Development, Institute on Community Integration
• Karen Kaehler, Office of the Vice President for Research, Technology Commercialization
• Claudia Kanter, School of Dentistry

• Ellen T Luepker, Medical School
• Russell Luepker, School of Public Health
• Connie Lynn Manske, School of Medicine
• Patty Napier (and Pat Whitcomb), Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost
• William Russell, Economics

For contact information, please visit umra.umn.edu > Contact Us > Member Search (login required).
HELLO: My name is Diane Young

Hometown? I was born in Washington, Pennsylvania, and grew up in rural western Pennsylvania.

When did you join UMRA? 2019

What was your very first job? Selling garden produce from the fence in front of our home. We grew the vegetables in our garden. I was seven and learned to make change that summer, selling vegetables.

What was your occupation when you retired from FT work? I worked in fundraising and development at the U for 25 years, including two years in a college on the St. Paul Campus and 15 years at the U of M Foundation. I retired as the development officer for Global Programs and Strategy Alliance.

Where were you in 1969 when Apollo 11 landed on the moon? In July 1969, I had just graduated from Penn State and was living at home with my dad, preparing to move to Connecticut. I taught Spanish in high school in Connecticut and met Nevin Young, who was a grad student at Yale [and is now a professor in the U’s College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences].

If you were an Olympic athlete, what would you like your sport to be? In high school during pre-Title 9 days, there wasn’t much opportunity for girls in sports. When our daughter was in high school, I’d watch her on the soccer field and feel like I wanted to kick the ball, too. I would have enjoyed playing soccer.

Do you have a favorite place on the U of M campus? I like standing on the patio at the Campus Club and looking up the mall, at downtown Minneapolis, and the light rail tracks. It’s fun to know that from there, you can go anywhere—literally and figuratively.

What is a fun fact about you we might not know? In my younger days, I was an avid rock climber and cross-country skier.

What is something you currently enjoy doing? Nevin and I both enjoy square dancing, bowling, and playing bocce. Last summer our bocce team tied for first place in our league.

A vision to transform our region’s greatest natural asset

The University of Minnesota and the Minneapolis park system have been intertwined from the very beginning. In the 1880s, founding University President William Folwell helped establish the independent Minneapolis Park Board and recruited Horace Cleveland, a renowned landscape architect and protégé of city planner Frederick Law Olmsted, to develop the original master plan that has informed the Minneapolis park system ever since.

In the spirit of that tradition, UMRA invited Minneapolis Parks Foundation Executive Director Tom Evers to our February forum to share a new vision for the addition of more parks and trails along the Mississippi River, stretching from St. Anthony Falls and the Stone Arch Bridge to the city’s northern border and better connecting neighborhoods to the river.

The Parks Foundation has played a pivotal role in shaping this community vision known as the RiverFirst Initiative, Evers said, providing critical philanthropic support and expertise in project implementation in partnership with the Park Board and the City. Two new parks are slated to open in 2020: Water Works and the Great Northern Greenway Overlook.

Evers showed images and maps illustrating the new connections these parks will create in the city and how the additional parkland is being developed to address racial and cultural inequities in the Minneapolis parks system.

The Parks Foundation has raised $17.5 million toward the effort and is within $500,000 from reaching its goal. A special challenge grant will match up to $100,000 toward this goal, and UMRA member Rick Asher urged others in the February forum audience to join the RiverFirst Campaign.

Once completed, these new world-class riverfront parks are expected to become as valued to the Minneapolis park system as the Chain of Lakes, Minnehaha Creek, Loring Park, and Victory Memorial Drive are today.

—Bob Bruininks, Program Committee
Three opportunities to volunteer
If you are seeking an opportunity to give back by volunteering, here are three possibilities to consider.

The Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) needs ambassador-greeters for IAS Thursdays at Northrop. IAS Thursdays brings ideas, conversations, and viewpoints from a huge range of national and international scholars to the heart of the University. The current series of seminars extends through April 30 and is free and open to the public.

The new Bell Museum brings together science, art, and the environment with a unique Minnesota perspective. The museum’s new home features a digital planetarium, high-tech exhibits, world-renowned wildlife dioramas, outdoor learning experiences, and more. Volunteers are currently wanted for positions as gallery cart attendant and docent. These positions contribute to the Bell Museum’s mission to engage the public in understanding, appreciating, and preserving nature.

The University Retirees Volunteer Center (URVC) is looking for volunteers to assist in staffing its office in the McNamara Alumni Center for a few hours every week. The primary focus of this job is facilitating the connection of potential volunteers with projects needing volunteers. Activities include email communications, telephone calls, record keeping, and general office duties.

If you would like to get involved with any of these options, email URVC at URVC@umn.edu or call 612-625-8016.

—John Anderson, chair, URVC Board of Directors

In remembrance
We report the passing of UMRA members and University leaders as we learn of these losses to our community.

Doug Woog died on December 14, 2019. He was the head coach for the University of Minnesota Twin Cities Men’s Hockey program from 1985 to 1999 and was the assistant coach of the U.S. Olympic Men’s Ice Hockey Team in the 1984 Olympics. He was inducted into the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame in 2002.

—Kathleen O’Brien, UMRA Cares Committee

UMRA Cares supports members
If you learn of someone who is facing a difficult life challenge, or for assistance and support in the event of the death or serious illness of an UMRA member or family member, please email us at umracares@umn.edu or call 612-626-4403 and leave a message for UMRA Cares.

Explore campus history and Ethiopia
The next UMRA Armchair Traveler program will be from 3:15 to 4:45 p.m. on Tuesday, April 14, in the Community Room of the Highland Park Community Center and Library at 1978 Ford Parkway in St. Paul. Space is limited to 45, so please email Lynn Anderson at boundarywaters07@gmail.com if you plan to attend.

Our first “tour guide,” Map and Geospatial Librarian Ryan Mattke from the University of Minnesota’s John R. Borchert Map Library, will take us on a rare tour of the U through his presentation, “A Trip through the Past: Documenting Campus History.” Ryan will describe the Libraries’ Campus History web application, which displays 160 years of building footprints along with historical maps and aerial photographs. His presentation will include interesting buildings that no longer exist, historical aerial imagery of campus, and how the interactive digital map was created.

UMRA member Ron Anderson, a professor emeritus of sociology, will be our second presenter, sharing “Ethiopia, 1945–2000: Photos and Stories from Ethiopia.” Ron grew up in Ethiopia until age 13; his father was a missionary and doctor for Emperor Haile Selassie. In 2000, Ron returned to Ethiopia with his wife. He has lots of photos and stories to share about this very unusual country.

The Community Room will be available from 3 to 5 p.m. so there will be a bit of time for socializing before and after the program.

—Lynn C. Anderson, chair, Armchair Traveler Committee
February workshop detailed changes ahead in long-term care

UMRA’s February workshop, moderated by Ron Anderson, presented three speakers picked for their expertise in the fields of senior housing and long-term care.

Trends in senior housing

Susan Farr, a vice president at Ebenezer, Minnesota’s largest senior-living operator, noted that Minnesota was #3 in the overall rankings of Best States in the 2019 Aging in America report from U.S. News and World Report. Farr predicted that the share of seniors choosing to remain in single-family residences will remain “flat” for the next 15 years. She also predicted shortages in caregivers, chore service providers, and others needed to enable seniors to “age in place.” Farr expects costs to rise for seniors who live in either homes or facilities, including assisted living, memory care, and general retirement communities. All specialized services will require better-trained staff. Farr also predicted increased use of “smart technology” for senior care in the future.

Advocating for seniors in conflicts

Cheryl Hennen, director of the State Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care, coordinates 20 full-time and hundreds of volunteer advocates for seniors in housing and caregiving conflicts. Together, these advocates receive, investigate, and resolve complaints from residents and families involved in long-term care, including seniors living at home who use a variety of in-home care services. Hennen said her office will double in size after the new Minnesota assisted living licensing system goes into effect August 1, 2021.

Assessing satisfaction with assisted living

Tetyana Shippee, PhD, a social gerontologist and associate professor in the School of Public Health, described a collaboration between the University and the Minnesota Department of Human Services to develop a statewide “report card” to help consumers make better-informed decisions about individual assisted living facilities. There is currently no standardized comparative information available, she said, adding, “Assisted living as a field is still in its infancy, but it is growing exponentially.” Shippee serves on the Minnesota Department of Health Assisted Living Licensure Advisory Committee and described many of the intricacies of state decision-making.

Adjusting to senior housing

Earl Nolting acted as discussant for the workshop, describing his downsizing and 2018 move to a continuing care retirement community and briefly highlighting the decisions, problems, and satisfactions involved. As a Cares Committee member, he has volunteered to share the details of his experience with others considering a move. He can be reached by email at enolting@umn.edu or call/text him at 651-895-4289.

—Earl Nolting, UMRA Cares Committee

Photo Club to meet March 10

“Water” will be the theme when the UMRA Photo Club meets from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 10, in the St. Anthony branch of the Hennepin County Library at the east end of the St. Anthony Village Shopping Center in Minneapolis.

If interested, come at 11:30 a.m. for lunch first at the Great Dragon Buffet, across the parking lot from the library. Newcomers are always welcome!

Send five to six theme pictures to Dick Kain at kain@umn.edu by noon on Monday, March 9, and if you’re willing have these pictures posted on Shutterfly, please copy Craig Swan at swan@umn.edu on your email.

And don’t forget to bring 10-12 pictures of your own choosing on a flash drive to share and talk about.

Contact Jean Kinsey at jkinsey@umn.edu or Craig Swan at swan@umn.edu for more information.

Book Club to meet March 20

Judy Helgen will lead the discussion of Inheritance: A Memoir of Genealogy, Paternity, and Love by Dani Shapiro when the UMRA Book Club meets at 2 p.m. on Friday, March 20, at the 1666 Coffman Building in Falcon Heights. Contact Pat Tollefson at p-toll@umn.edu for more information.

Visit the UMRA website for a review of Leadership: In turbulent times by Doris Kearns Goodwin, the club’s February read.
Experiences with aging
By Ron Matross

I’m slowing down and I’m not particularly happy about it. I fully appreciate the pleasures of taking things more slowly and savoring moments of beauty, knowing that my lifetime supply of such moments is dwindling. Still, there are times when I mourn my swifter, stronger self.

I particularly feel that remorse, tinged with a touch of jealousy, when I’m out riding my bike and another old guy blows by me. Being passed by somebody my own age stings. I sometimes deal with my feelings by doing a “catch and release,” speeding up and catching the person and then backing off without trying to pass. This is actually a constructive response, since it gives me a little interval training while reassuring me that I still can move it.

A deeper relief comes when I see people out walking or riding despite obvious disabilities. There’s one guy I see frequently along West River Road who pushes his twisted body slowly along with his cane. Moving looks like a struggle for him, but there he is. Out there. Doing it. Every day. Seeing him makes me feel admiration for him and gratitude for what I have. I have limitations, too, but they aren’t as challenging as his.

Grace and grit
It occurs to me that successful aging involves an ever-changing mixture of grace and grit. Grace to accept your limitations, and enough grit to keep them from dominating your life. I’ve seen people who’ve gotten the mix wrong: bitter old folks who are crabby and mean, passive people who have given up, and those whose Botoxed faces and unnatural hair colors bespeak a desperate pursuit of youth.

I’ve gained some of this wisdom the hard way. I’ve undergone three big rehabs, one of which was eight years ago when I had a cavernoma, a bleeding growth of abnormal blood vessels on my cerebellum. My terrific U of M neurosurgeon removed it and saved my life, but I was left with double vision and a lack of balance. I couldn’t walk a straight line. I went to a residential rehab facility where I started intensive eight-hour-a-day therapy to regain my balance and vision. The outcome was by no means certain.

It was there that I developed the motto, “Illness or age is gonna take what it’s gonna take, but don’t give it any more than you have to.” GRIT. The corollary was, “Tough break. Don’t be a jerk about it.” GRACE.

I was prepared to live the rest of my life with diminished balance and get a tricycle to ride, but I desperately wanted to avoid that. After my therapy sessions I’d spend evenings in the library working on “extra credit” kids’ puzzles to regain my motor skills. Thank God my rehab was successful, but I like to think I would have had the grace to remain positive if it hadn’t been.

Maybe I will descend into bitterness when the next setback comes along. I hope not. Aging challenges each of us to find the right combination of grace and grit to make our time enjoyable, for us and for those around us.

April 25 UMRA outing: Twins vs. Red Sox
Join fellow UMRA members for an April baseball outing to cheer the Minnesota Twins when they play the Boston Red Sox. Game time is 1:10 p.m. on Saturday, April 25.

UMRA will be helping to celebrate U of M Day at Target Field, organized by the University of Minnesota Alumni Association. Your ticket will include a limited-edition maroon-and-gold Twins cap.

UMRA has reserved a block of 20 tickets in the right field grandstand, the perfect spot for an April afternoon game. Go to https://groupmatics.events/event/uofmretirees2020/offer for details and to purchase tickets by midnight April 4.

—Will Craig, Social Activities Committee, 612-716-9195
You’re Welcome Here

Looking for a way to stay active?

UMN Retirees are eligible for RecWell Memberships at the University Recreation and Wellness Center and the St. Paul Gym.

Visit us at http://recwell.umn.edu for membership options and pricing.

Silver Sneakers memberships are also available at the St. Paul Gym for eligible Retirees

Try us out! Mention this ad at one of our Member Service Desks to receive a free day pass to any RecWell facility.


Welcome! And thank you to RecWell, our new sponsor, for helping to sponsor our March newsletter.