



Your Voice Matters: Making Health Care Better as We Age

By the year 2050, almost one-quarter of people in the U.S. will be 65 or older. This means we must make sure their health care works well for them. Randall Rutta, CEO of the National Health Council (NHC), recently talked about the most important considerations for seniors and their caregivers at the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists annual meeting.

Here's what he shared about what residents and families want and need:



Your Top Priorities in Health Care

- ✓ **Engagement:** You don't want doctors to make your decisions; you want to be involved and part of your care team.
- ✓ **Access:** You need it to be easy to get the care you need, like seeing a doctor or getting a medication.
- ✓ **Affordability:** Care and medicine shouldn't cost too much.
- ✓ **Innovation:** You want to see new and better ways to stay healthy.

Best Ways to Work with Your Care Team:

- ✓ **Start early:** You and your family should be involved in care planning from the very beginning.
- ✓ **Your experience counts:** Your knowledge about yourself and your health is just as important as the doctor's knowledge.
- ✓ **Caregivers help, but you lead:** Your family and other caregivers are vital, but their knowledge adds to, and does not replace, your own knowledge.
- ✓ **Stay informed:** You need to know what's happening with your care at all times.

Common Problems and Misunderstandings

- ✓ **Feeling uncared for:** Many residents and caregivers feel that the health care system lacks compassion. This can harm their emotional well-being.
- ✓ **Assumptions are dangerous:** Your care team should never assume what's most important to you; they should always ask.



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- ✓ **Too little, too late:** Being asked for your opinion only after all the decisions have been made is not helpful. You need a chance to truly influence the plan.
- ✓ **One voice isn't enough:** The care team should not listen to just one resident and assume that person speaks for everyone else in the assisted living community.

Pharmacists as Key Helpers

The pharmacist plays a very important role, helping residents by:

- ✓ **Medication Management:** Making sure you take the right dose, at the right time, and that your medicines don't react adversely with one another.
- ✓ **Education:** Explaining exactly how your medicines work and why you need them.
- ✓ **Preventive Care:** Giving you vaccinations and other care to help prevent illness.

The Role of AI

Mr. Rutta also talked about technology, especially Artificial Intelligence (AI), and noted that those who use it need to understand both its promises and its pitfalls.

The Promises	The Pitfalls
Better ways to diagnose and understand illnesses.	Concerns about privacy and keeping your health information safe.
Smart tools to help doctors make decisions.	Hidden biases that may result in treating certain groups of people unfairly.
Ability to watch your health from far away.	Mistakes when turning speech into writing (transcription errors).
Faster and better ways to create new medicines.	Errors in understanding medical information.

While AI is a helpful tool, Mr. Rutta cautioned that doctors and nurses must not rely too much on it. Person-centered care must always be the top priority.

Future Focus

The National Health Council is committed to making sure your voice is heard in all health decisions. They recently created the [Patient Experience + Innovation Center \(PXI\)](#) to make sure that new technologies reflect your life and your priorities.

Mr. Rutta emphasized, "We remain committed to ensuring that resident voices are heard, their needs are prioritized, and their health outcomes are improved."