

“Looking at Long-term Care in a New Way” (September 22, 2011)

We all know that the face of long-term care (LTC) needs to change. Slowly, it is beginning to change. This is evident in the Medicaid waiver programs that are offering services in beneficiaries’ homes instead of requiring them to move to a nursing home when care needs arise. However, for individuals who are completely dependent for care, a move to a nursing facility is still the standard form of intervention. Newer nursing facilities are pushing to integrate a true “home-like” feel, but many older nursing homes still hold many of the qualities the make potential clients cringe.

As the baby boomers are aging, we need to re-evaluate what their needs and desires will be. The current state of the nursing home is not going to meet the needs of many of these individuals who will soon be needing the care they can provide. One possible community would focus on the co-housing of like-minded individuals seeking an environment where care needs are shared. Sounds pretty idealistic, and not the right fit for everyone, but Friends Center City in Philadelphia, PA (www.friendscentercity.org) has created a community much like this, with services provided in individuals’ homes by Friends LifeCare (www.friendslifecare.org). Friends Center City has established one of the first of, hopefully, many communities that offers a new concept of how to provide care for older individuals. I applaud this effort and encourage individuals and families to express their desire for continued change in LTC.