



Point of View

State budget cuts hit close to home

Dr. Barbara Porter

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Gov. Jerry Brown will soon decide the fate of hundreds of Adult Day Health Care centers in California, including one of our own, the Inland Empire Adult Day Health Care Center in Corona. He will have the final say on a bill passed by the Legislature that appropriates \$85 million in funding to keep this valuable program alive. If he approves this vital measure, centers like Inland Empire ADHC will be able to continue to provide for the critical and life-sustaining services for elderly and disabled adults with Alzheimer's, heart disease, stroke and developmental disabilities. What makes our center so special is that it keeps these medically frail patients of diverse backgrounds in their communities at a very low cost to the state.

At \$37 per day, ADHC provides for the basic medical and therapeutic needs of these individuals that prevent them from being institutionalized in nursing homes and other emergency services at five times the cost of the ADHC program. At the same time, it allows the patients' families to continue working, knowing their loved ones are safe and protected and given the best of medical care.

Caregivers and medical professionals at Inland Empire ADHC are particularly concerned over how ongoing and recent dramatic cuts to ADHC will impact their patients. Desmond D., a 39-year-old Corona resident diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and Schizoaffective-bipolar disorder, is just one of 90 patients who regularly depend on our ADHC services on a daily basis to help them live fulfilling, independent lives outside of the confines of a nursing home or mental hospital.

Desmond's Parkinson's disease has forced him to rely on a walker to assist with his mobility and also has impaired his ability to care for himself. Due to the severity of his diagnosis, he also suffers from depression with significant mood swings and frequently speaks of wanting to kill himself.

Desmond currently lives with his retired parents. And while Desmond's family is extremely supportive and dedicated to their son, the degree of care in which Desmond depends on means that he would most likely be forced into an institution if the governor decides to reject the Legislature's provision of funding.

Inland Empire Adult Day Health Care Center administers and monitors Desmond's 12 medications for possible reactions and side effects on a daily basis. Beyond that, we provide a structured environment with therapeutic activities that enhances self-worth and diminishes depressive feelings. We embrace him as one of our own and allow him to partake in group activities and engage in one-on-one as well as group therapy sessions.

Our center also keeps track of Desmond's other ailments, including his asthma and hypertension, and offers full nursing care, including registered nurses (RN), Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVN), occupational therapists, and more. And that's all for \$37 a day, equal to that of a family dining at MacDonald's.

Last March, the Legislature approved the governor's call to eliminate Adult Day Health Care as a Medi-Cal state plan optional benefit. However the Legislature did not seek complete elimination of the ADHC infrastructure and added back an appropriation of \$85 million for fiscal year 2011-12 (less than half of today's full budget) to be matched with federal dollars for transitioning patients out of ADHC.

If these proposed cuts go into effect, funding for Inland Empire Adult Day Health Care will be cut in half and the center will be placed in the federal waiver program. This in turn will force some patients to drop from the program and we hope Desmond is not one of them.

We cannot tell at this point which of our patients will be forced out of the program and into alternative care situations, such as hospitals or nursing homes, but it's a terrible position to be in.

The Inland Empire ADHC Center currently provides for the care of 90 elderly and disabled patients, half of whom will be abandoned without the critical care they need if the governor approves the original plan to cut the program in half. If he decides not to provide for the \$85 million in funding approved by the Legislature, the health of all 90 of these patients will be jeopardized.

Those who came before us deserve to be honored with respect and dignity. Caring for their medical needs is the least we can do as a state and as a compassionate society.

Dr. Barbara Porter has been the program director of Inland Empire Adult Day Health Care Center in Corona for the past five years.