

Voices: Funding must be protected

As a certified nursing assistant at Quaker Hill Nursing Center in nearby Lowell, Kan., and as a Joplin resident, I found the guest column "Our oldest seniors are in harm's way" (Globe, Nov. 19) to be especially important in educating my fellow Missourians how Medicare cuts like those under active consideration in Washington would undermine those of us working on the front lines of care.

As bad as the Medicare cuts would be for our patients' care, they are not the only ones who will be impacted by Medicare funding cuts. Staff is usually the first to feel the impact; our jobs become far more difficult. This will make our workload twice as heavy. Staff cuts will be one of the things that is made as the Medicare cuts are put into place. Those of us who work in long term care do because we care. The quality of care will not go down because we will do what we do on a regular basis to make sure our elders will be taken care of. Unfortunately we will be more rushed for time and the work will have to be done quicker, which would not allow us to spend the extra time with our elders that we want to so that we can meet their individual needs and wants. The environment in which we strive to deliver optimum care is essentially compromised. One of the key elements of quality care is the ability of a facility to attract and retain qualified staff, and we can't do this without adequate Medicare funding. The bottom line is that Medicare cuts jeopardize the jobs of those responsible for the most intimate care needs of our patients, and who make the difference in care outcomes.

I see firsthand, every day, how this critical Medicare funding makes a fundamental difference not just in the lives of our most vulnerable frail, elderly and disabled, but in the overall quality of care. Now, more than ever, Medicare funding must be protected.

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Joplin