

nabp newsletter

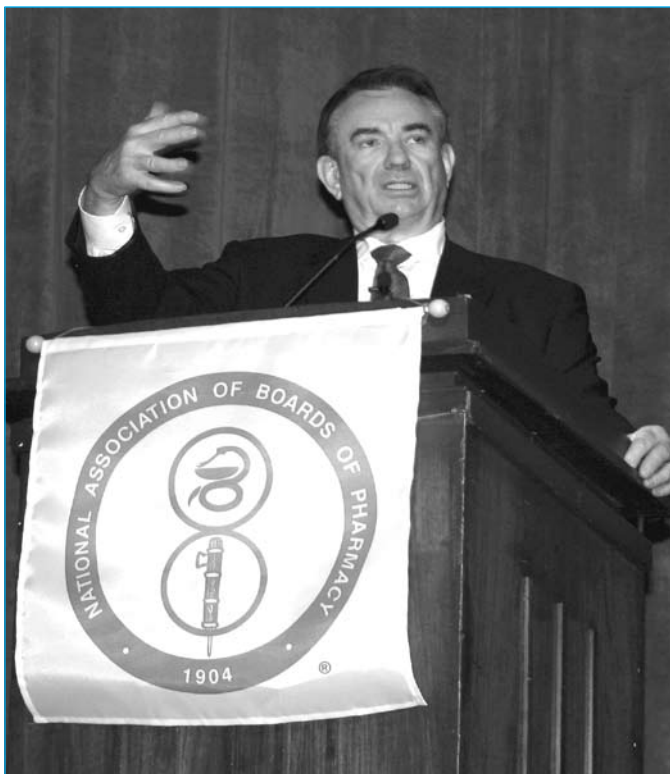
The Honorable Tommy G. Thompson Offers Insight Into the Future of Health Care

The Honorable Tommy G. Thompson, former Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) offered insights on the current and future state of the department at NABP's 102nd Annual Meeting, held April 8-11, 2006, in San Francisco, CA. During the session "Public Policy Decisions: An Analysis of Issues That Have Dramatically Changed Health Care in the United States" Secretary Thompson told attendees that changes must be made to the US health care system soon or there will be dire consequences.

The Future of Health Care

According to Secretary Thompson, just this year \$2 trillion will be spent on health care. The amount of money spent on health care will double to \$4 trillion by 2013 – at this time Secretary Thompson predicts a decline in the nation's health care system because there will no longer be an excess of cash flowing into the Department of Treasury. He predicts that between 2013 and 2020 Medicare will go into bankruptcy unless the system is fixed soon.

There is an immediate need to transform the nation's health care system



The Honorable Tommy G. Thompson, former secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, said at NABP's 102nd Annual Meeting that disease management, electronic prescribing, and other measures would help reform the US health care system by cutting costs and putting the focus on prevention.

in order to make the system more affordable, more accessible, and better for patients. Currently 75%-80% of the \$2 trillion is spent treating chronic illnesses; 125 million people have one or more chronic illnesses, Secretary Thompson notes. In today's health care system, the usual scenario is that health care providers wait until people become ill and then spend thousands, sometimes millions,

of dollars to keep their patients alive. Secretary Thompson believes that more money should be spent on the prevention or the management of illnesses and the promotion of a healthier lifestyle.

Secretary Thompson believes there are five key areas of prevention that must be addressed to improve the health care system in the United States. First, he says, a heavier emphasis must be placed on adopting health-

ier lifestyles, eg, giving up tobacco, eating healthier, and exercising.

Though not a regulated drug, tobacco is the most addictive drug, says Secretary Thompson, and approximately 442,000 people died from tobacco-related illnesses in 2005. Secretary Thompson suggests that there be a \$1 tax on tobacco products that does not go to the government but is given directly to services that assist smokers to quit, such as medications and counseling services. In addition, diabetes, which can often be prevented with a proper diet and exercise, has become an epidemic in the US – 21 million people have Type 2 diabetes and another 41 million people are pre-diabetic. One out of every 14 health-care dollars goes to find a cure for diabetes.

The second area of prevention that Secretary Thompson advocates is disease management. Providing guidance to patients and clients regarding better managing their blood sugars and prescriptions is essential. While pharmacy and medications compose only 12% of a medical bill, it does the most good and, therefore, disease management through medication is essential.

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Lynch Named NABP's 2006-2007 Honorary President

NABP is pleased to announce that Kendall M. Lynch, RPh, has been named honorary president for the year 2006-2007. In recognition of his commitment to the Association's mission and goals, NABP chose Mr Lynch as its honorary president for his service to the public health, his dedication to NABP and the profession of pharmacy, and for his unshakeable integrity and unsurpassed humanity.

Throughout his 44 years in the profession, Mr Lynch has been an active member both within NABP and the Tennessee Board of Pharmacy.

A member of NABP since 1995, Mr Lynch has served on several task forces and committees including the Task Force to Examine the Quality and Standards of Internship Requirements, the Committee on Constitution and Bylaws, and the Advisory Committee on Examinations, of which he is currently chair. He has also served on various committees for NABP District III, serving as meeting co-chair in 1997.


From 1995 to 2005, he was executive director of the Tennessee Board of Pharmacy. During his

tenure, he implemented the registration of pharmacy technicians and was responsible for the implementation of the Controlled Substance Database Prescription Monitoring Program.

Other organizations in which he has participated that benefited from his experience include the Middle Tennessee Society of Pharmacists and the Tennessee Pharmacists Association.

A licensed pharmacist since 1962, Mr Lynch graduated from the University of Tennessee College of Pharmacy. He began working at Knight

Drug Company and served as staff pharmacist, manager, president, and owner. He continues to serve patients as president and chief executive officer of Secure Pharmacy Plus, where he has organizational and managerial oversight, and is responsible for personnel, finances, and legislative and regulatory review among his duties.

His considerable work in the practice of pharmacy has not gone unnoticed. He has received honors including the R.L. Crowe Award, the Distinguished Service to Pharmacy Award in 2001, and the 2005 Outstanding Alumnus Award. 

Thompson

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Information technology, the third component of effective prevention, plays a large role in disease management – other industries depend on computers to operate their business, but health care is one profession that is not current with technology.

Electronic prescribing can reduce medication errors and save time for pharmacy staff. Only 18% of the health care industry currently utilizes e-prescribing. According to the Institute for Safe

Medication Practices, 98,000 medication mistakes were made in 2005 – over 50% of these errors could have been avoided via e-prescribing.

The 45 million Americans who are uninsured also drive up costs in the health care system, and is fourth on Secretary Thompson's list. When in need, the uninsured usually go to the emergency room, the most expensive place to receive medical care, instead of receiving preventive checkups. Providing insurance to all citizens will help drive down health care costs because patients will

be able to take advantage of preventative care.

Finally, the current Medicaid system needs to be fixed, according to Secretary Thompson. He stated that if he were in charge, he would split Medicaid – health care and medications for acute care for mothers and children would fall under the jurisdiction of the states, where the states would pay 90% of the cost. Long-term care for the elderly and institutionalized care would then be covered by the federal government.

Secretary Thompson noted that in the long run,

Medicare Part D will be an excellent law. The pharmacists are the unsung heroes of the Medicare Part D program – they did not know how it would impact them until the program went into effect but rose above it for their patients.

Secretary Thompson closed the session by noting that he sees a lot of hope in the future of the health care system – there are many ways to change the system to make it more affordable, more accessible, and improve the quality of the system and the pharmacist has been put in the driver's seat. 