

NURSING HOMES

The vast majority of Americans over 65 years of age are eager and able to play a continuing role as active, independent participants in the life of our country. Encouraging them to play this role—and providing greater opportunities for them to do so—is a cornerstone of this Administration's policy concerning older Americans.

For almost 1 million of our 20 million senior citizens, however, a dignified and humane existence requires a degree of care from others that can usually be found only in a nursing home or extended care facility. For those who need them, the nursing homes of America should be shining symbols of comfort and concern.

Many of our nursing homes meet this standard most admirably. Day after day and year after year they demonstrate the capacity of our society to care for even the most dependent of its elderly citizens in a decent and compassionate manner. It is the goal of this Administration to see that all of our nursing homes provide care of this same high quality.

Unfortunately, many facilities now fall woefully short of this standard. Unsanitary and unsafe, overcrowded and understaffed, the substandard nursing home can be a terribly depressing institution. To live one's later years in such a place is to live in an atmosphere of neglect and degradation. . . .

The reason that many substandard facilities have often continued to receive Medicare and Medicaid payments are many and complex. It has been difficult to enforce the law that requires participant homes to meet certain standards. In the final analysis, however, there can be no excuse for lax law enforcement—and I therefore am taking a number of steps to improve enforcement efforts. . . .

As we work to improve the quality of life for the elderly—and especially for those who must rely on the care provided in the nursing homes of our country—we should not expect overnight miracles. The problems we face have developed in too many places over too long a time. But we can expect that our efforts will result in significant and continuing progress. With the cooperation of the Congress, the State governments, and the nursing home industry, we can truly transform substandard nursing homes so that the very best nursing homes of today will be the typical nursing homes of tomorrow.

—Excerpted from President Nixon's statement on nursing homes, August 6, 1971, Nashua, N.H.

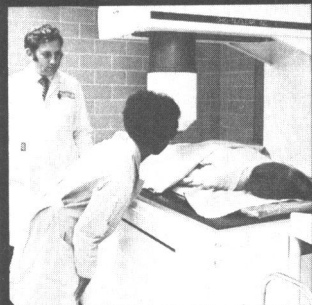
Cover—Physician examines a child. Factors in children's anxieties about visits to a physician are explored in a paper beginning on page 1131. Photo by Jim Laragy.



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- (PR) Publication review
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