



John Rowe Testifies Before Congress on Aging Baby Boomers and Impending Healthcare Crisis

John W. Rowe, MD, professor of Health Policy and Management and former chairman and CEO of Aetna, testified before Congress on Wednesday, April 16 on the findings of a study on the aging baby boomers.

The report, *Retooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce*, was issued by a committee of the Institute of Medicine, chaired by Dr. Rowe. According to the findings, as the population of seniors grows to comprise approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population-expected by the year 2011-they will face a healthcare workforce that is too small and critically unprepared to meet their health needs.

"We face an impending crisis as the growing number of older patients, who are living longer with more complex health needs, increasingly outpaces the number of healthcare providers with the knowledge and skills to care for them capably," said Dr. Rowe. "The sheer number of older patients in the coming years will require trying new models for delivering healthcare and the commitment of greater financial resources," he added. "If our aging family members and friends are to live as robustly as they can and in the best health possible, we must have a work force of adequate size and competency to take care of them."

Some of the initiatives called for in the report include the immediate training of all healthcare providers in the basics of geriatric care; preparing family members and other informal caregivers, who currently receive little or no training in how to tend to their aging loved ones; and having Medicare, Medicaid, and other health plans pay higher rates to boost recruitment and retention of geriatric specialists and care aides.

For the report summary and press release, please visit: <http://www.iom.edu/?ID=53452>.