

An Impossible Choice: Paying for Prescriptions or Food

By: Ava Framm



After retirement, the last thing any person thinks about is how they will pay for important expenses, yet 11% of American senior citizens struggle to pay for both medications and groceries. The decision to forgo one essential for another begins with insurance policies. These policies are complicated as is, and become more confusing when it comes to drug coverage and benefits. Many seniors pay hundreds of dollars a month in out of pocket expenses when it comes to paying for prescriptions. If they choose to put all of their money towards medications (and most seniors take anywhere from two to fifteen medications a day), they sacrifice money towards groceries and other household bills.

But seniors who still live in their homes are not the only one struggling to make ends meet; those in assisted/independent living facilities also struggle. Those that are still capable of living on their own are responsible for remembering to take their medications and purchase their own food. If they forget to take a medication or forget to replenish their refrigerator, it can lead to undereating and severe health problems. Vincent M., an eighty-six year old man living in the Masonic Village, relies on his children to make sure he takes the correct medication, and receives meals from Meals on Wheels.

“Every Monday, I get meals delivered to my building, which usually covers me. I’m not eating as much as I used to, so most of the time whatever I had for dinner one night I have for lunch the next day. Thursdays are the best days, though, because I get bagels and sometimes a loaf of bread. So I freeze a couple of the bagels to last me into the next week.” He goes on to discuss his hardships versus other residents:

“I try to make sure I stay active and alert, because if I don’t take my daily trips around the building, I miss the Meals on Wheels truck. My son comes by to check on me, and brings me crackers, or something like that, but that’s not a full meal. My daughter picks up all of my medications for me and helps me take the correct ones. I am very fortunate, and I know that I would not be taking as good care of myself if it has not been for my children.”

Many seniors grow disheartened after they struggle to make ends meet because most have had steady jobs their entire working careers. So while they are still receiving Social Security checks, that is not enough income if they have many medications they need to take that are not covered by their insurance. Along with several medications comes with dietary restrictions, which can quickly add up.

But just because thousands of seniors are fighting hunger does not mean that they are alone in their fight. Food banks across the country, besides aiding the homeless, also ensure that senior citizens receive any food they need. Just because this is a vulnerable time in their lives does not mean that they have to be alone and afraid. There are always organizations that will donate assistance or resources to those in need.

Sources: <https://seniorcarecorner.com/critical-medications-or-food-seniors-choose>
<https://www.foodbankccs.org/2013/02/seniors-choose-between-groceries-and-medicine.html>