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## Care of the Chronically Ill at Home: An Unresolved Dilemma in Health Policy for the United States

KAREN BUHLER-WILKERSON <sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup> University of Pennsylvania

*Address correspondence to:* Karen Buhler-Wilkerson, 418 Currie Blvd., Barbara Bates Center for the Study of the History of Nursing, School of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104 (email: [Karenwil@nursing.upenn.edu](mailto:Karenwil@nursing.upenn.edu)).

**KEYWORDS**

Home care • chronic illness • Medicare • nursing

**ABSTRACT**

The problems of caring for patients with disabling illnesses who neither get well nor die are not new. Such patients have always required assistance at home from family, benevolent volunteers, or paid caregivers. Despite two centuries of experimentation, however, no agreement exists concerning the balance between the public and private resources to be allocated through state funding, private insurance, and family contributions for the daily and routine care at home for chronically ill persons of all ages. This article examines these issues and the unavoidable tensions between fiscal reality and legitimate need. It also uses historical and policy analyses to explain why home care has never become the cornerstone for caring for the chronically ill.

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