

2009 - It's Time!

Why We Need National Health Care Reform Now

Gary Wells of Tipton county has 3 months to live. When he suffered a seizure at work last year, he was quickly diagnosed with brain cancer, lost his full time job building marine engines, and began making monthly COBRA payments to cover his health care needs. In December, he was declared disabled and received a Social Supplemental Income (SSI) check for one month, enabling him to get on TennCare, but he would have to wait until December, 2011, to get Medicare.

Gary Wells had planned to live his last few months of life in peace. He and his family hoped that once he was on TennCare, he would not have to worry about affording health care. He would receive end-of-life care which would quell his seizures and keep him relatively pain-free.



Gary Wells has been diagnosed with terminal brain cancer and is being dropped from TennCare, leaving him without end-of-life care.

Tragically, he is one of 130,000 who will lose their TennCare. TennCare says that it is not fair for Gary to stay on TennCare because the Daniels eligibility class is no longer open and Gary is not eligible for another TennCare open eligibility category. **If TennCare would re-open the Medically Needy/Spend Down program, Gary would be eligible, but TennCare refuses to do this.** His physician has already notified Gary that if he loses TennCare, the physician will no longer provide him care.

Gary's partner of 15 years, Cynthia, has tried to help Gary navigate TennCare's labyrinth. She reflects, "He loved going to work. He paid his taxes and loves his grandchildren. He values life. It's unfair." Cynthia notes that Gary will not receive Medicare until December of 2011. "He won't live that long," she says. Gary cannot afford to participate in the state's high-risk pool, AccessTN, even if he were deemed eligible. **AccessTN would eat up about 73 per cent of Gary's modest disability check.**

Cynthia understands that because he is disabled, **Gary would undoubtedly qualify for TennCare's Medically Needy / Spend Down category if it were reopened for adults.** "He shouldn't have to worry about this," she says. "He will die even sooner without health care."



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