



## Weekly Checkup

# Spending on Military Health Care is Rapidly Growing

CONOR RYAN | MARCH 4, 2015

Medicare and Medicaid—the large public health insurance programs that together cover more than 100 million Americans and spend nearly \$1 trillion per year—dominate the discussion of budget sustainability in health care with good reason. Yet, there are other public insurance programs that face their own budgetary troubles, albeit on a smaller scale. For example, the Department of Defense provides health insurance for 9.6 million active duty servicemembers, retirees, and their family members through TriCare. Spending on TriCare beneficiaries has nearly tripled over the past two decades, far outpacing the per-beneficiary spending growth in Medicare or Medicaid. While a portion of higher spending is a result of the military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the main obstacle facing TriCare is not so different from civilian health care programs: an aging beneficiary population. The growing burden of health care costs is unsustainable and jeopardizes the high quality medical care our armed forces deserve.

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