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A pioneer in menopause research, Dr. Utian founded the world's first menopause clinic in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1966 and established the Cleveland Menopause Clinic in 1983.

Recipient of many research grants and awards, he is the author of more than 150 scientific publications and five books. He is the Honorary Past-President of the International Menopause Society and Honorary Founding President and Executive Director of The North American Menopause Society. He is also Chairman of the Council of Affiliated Menopause Societies (CAMS) of the International Menopause Society.

## Your Letter to Congress

I have a fantasy that all healthcare providers with concerns about women throughout menopause and beyond will be simultaneously energized to, just once, write to their congressmen and senators. The following is the sort of letter I hope they will write:

“Dear Honorable Member of the Senate/House:

It is my humble understanding that we, the people, sent you to Washington with the primary responsibility of securing the current and future safety, security, health and quality of life of all of this nation's citizens. Well, I have news for you; while you are fiddling, Rome is burning.

You cannot but be aware of the time bomb ticking in front of our eyes. The population of this country is aging rapidly. Don't take my word for this; please peruse the volumes of data—which are all too clear—emanating from the latest census. Where, I ask, is your response in terms of diverting a small portion of this country's wealth to preventive health care?

Nearly half of all women over age 60 will die from cardiovascular disease; breast cancer, lung cancer, noncancerous smoking diseases of the lung and complications of osteoporotic fracture each will take the lives of perhaps 5% of this portion of our population. Large numbers of postmenopausal women develop type II diabetes and hypothyroidism, and by the age of 80 nearly half of that population will be showing evidence of cognitive decline. The biggest toll taken by this escalating volume of disease is a costly one, both to individual citizens and the healthcare system; namely, a greater proportion of lives that are lived with disability.

Only preventive medicine will reduce the disease impact on the tidal wave of women over 50, moving into their 60s, 70s, 80s and beyond. Preventive health care, appropriately planned, distributed and monitored, can reduce the incidence of diseases such as those listed above. The result will be a reduction in the number of years our older citizens will live with the disabilities that limit their value to themselves and society. The result will also be a considerable saving in healthcare dollars spent on the frail elderly.

But preventive health care begins when we are still young, and this is where we need your help. The health insurance and managed care companies are not going to foot the preventive care bill for younger people. Why should they? After all, the actual tidal wave of established disease develops after age 65, and that is on the government's dime via a program called Medicare.

So, the purpose of this letter is to implore you to take a two-pronged approach to the prevention of a very frightening scenario. First, there is an urgent need for legislation forcing all health insurers to provide cost-effective, evidence-based preventive health programs to the “pre-Medicare” population. Second, there is a need for the federal government to review preventive health care provided under Medicare and to set an example for the world. Protocols that could be considered are already available.

There might be just enough time left to ensure that today's perimenopausal population is spared the volume of disability predicted. If not, as sure as day follows night, there will be a generational war, and the disabled elderly will not be the only victims. The shape of the future rests in your hands now.

Yours sincerely,

(Your signature)  
Healthcare Provider”

The choice is yours, readers of *Menopause Management*, providers of health care to women through and beyond menopause and pioneers in holistic preventive health care for women. Are you willing to help me realize my fantasy? Are you, for once, going to be proactive and actually write your letters?

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*Executive Director and  
Honorary Founding President  
The North American Menopause Society*