

# Health Focus

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## About the Expert

### Alfred Lee Dingler, CLU

Alfred Lee, Dingler, CLU founded the Prime Insurance Agency in 1985, following graduation from Georgia State University with a major in risk management and insurance.

He received his Certified Life Underwriter (CLU) designation from The American College in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, after completing the 10-course program of study last year.

Prime writes all lines of property, casualty, life and health insurance for individuals, families, and business in the Southern Crescent. Dingler was selected Aetna Agent of the Year for the State of Georgia in 1986 and 1987, and he has been a keynote speaker at several industry functions. "The hardest thing I've ever done is start my own insurance agency from scratch," he said.

Dingler is a 1981 graduate of Morrow High School and currently resides in Clayton County. He and his wife Maria are expecting their first child in January.



## SECURING THE GOLDEN YEARS

By Alfred Lee Dingler, CLU

The Golden Years are intended to be the time when people take life easy and enjoy themselves. Unfortunately, the realities of this period can ruin the best plans of relaxing and traveling fun. Older adults are faced with rapidly increasing health care costs and the overwhelming price of long term nursing care.

Most people do not want to talk about the need for long term care insurance. No one wants to believe he or she will ever be in a nursing home or need health care at home. In fact, it is difficult to predict who will need this type of care or when they will need it, and many people have no preestablished plans for paying for long term health care.

Studies have shown that it is not unreasonable to pay \$50,000 for one year in a long term care facility, and 70 percent of all single people admitted to nursing homes deplete their savings within 90 days. A married couple typically uses up their savings within six months. Standard insurance policies do not pay expenses, and family budgets cannot cope with these costs either.

For those who think they will never need nursing home care or that Medicaid will provide the needed funds for this type of care, recent industry statistics may shed more light on the subject. The New England Journal reported that one in seven men and one in three women who turned 65 in 1990 are expected to spend at least one year in a nursing home.

Medicare only pays for admission in a skilled

nursing home after patients have depleted their own assets or have transferred their assets two and one-half years before needing care.

The solution then, for many people, may be long term care insurance. Long term care insurance is similar to other insurance in that it allows people to pay a known and affordable premium that offsets the risk of much larger out-of-pocket expenses. More than 130 insurance companies now offer this type of coverage, even though long term care insurance is a relatively new line of private insurance.

Although there may be some differences in definition from policy to policy, it is important to understand the general distinctions among the nursing home plans. To make sure you have a quality long term care policy, you should look for features such as:

- guaranteed renewable for life
- benefits for all levels of care; skilled, intermediate, and custodial
- home health care options
- no prior hospitalization required
- inflation protection option
- waiver of premium
- and coverage for Alzheimer's disease

Insurance policies are legal contracts, so you need to read and compare the actual policies in order to make sure you understand all the provisions. You need to buy the policy from an agent and insurance company you trust. You should discuss the policies with people whose opinions you respect, like your doctor, your children or an informed relative or friend.