



# wecareNEWS

Personal • Dedicated • Healthcare



### Just the facts

Here are a few stats about aging that may surprise you:

- 12 per cent of the population is seniors yet they consume 40 per cent of all prescription medications
- 50 per cent of medications used by seniors are done so inappropriately.
- 25 per cent of hospital admissions of patients over 50 are the result of medication problems.

### What is a care plan?

A care plan outlines a set of actions that your We Care nurse or personal support worker will implement to resolve health concerns that have been identified by the client, family or nurse. The plan guides the ongoing provision of services. A typical care plan

- will focus on actions which are designed to solve or minimize existing or potential problems
- is the result of a comprehensive nursing assessment
- should be holistic, meaning it should encompass the physical, emotional, social, spiritual and informational needs of the client
- should be focused on successfully meeting outcomes or goals, which the client or family agree are achievable

These identified outcomes provide a way to evaluate if the care plan is meeting the needs of the client and family.

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## Living with chronic disease

With medical advances and better health care it's good news that Canadians can expect to live one-third of a lifetime longer than previous generations. The bad news, however, is that the risk of chronic disease and disability increases with advancing age. While the keys to managing chronic disease are prevention and early detection, the reality is that many of us will live with one or more chronic conditions during our lives.

### The senior years

Nobody wants to live with a long-term illness or disability. Yet new research indicates that despite living for an average of 18 years beyond the age of 65, most seniors will spend more than seven years with a chronic medical condition. Sadly, it then becomes



a question of when a medical condition or disability will be diagnosed, how it will be treated and what the impact will be on the patient's lifestyle and quality of life.

### Managing independently

Most seniors and persons with medical conditions or disabilities would prefer to live independently even after diagnosis. In fact, 93 per cent of seniors are still living

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- Advanced foot care
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7 days a week, 365 days a year

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*Where peace of mind has a home address™*

[www.wecare.ca](http://www.wecare.ca)

# A collaborative model of care



Our expectations of health care services have, in some cases, evolved along a “find it and fix it” mentality. This works well for short-term problems but does not address the complex, on-going needs of people with chronic diseases and their families. As a result, the current care of chronic conditions sometimes becomes a poorly connected string of episodes determined by patient problems rather than a co-ordinated network of supportive evidence-based services.

## A team approach

The challenge then for individuals, families and health care providers is to recognize the needs of patients with long-term conditions and develop strategies for improving care.

To be successful, it's critical to look to a model of chronic disease management, which involves patient and family education. It should be a model where home care nurses work side-by-side with doctors, pharmacists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and other health professionals in the community. When team members combine expertise, they can enhance their patient's level of understanding, improve treatment compliance and support self-help solutions.

## Medication compliance

Keeping a patient on medication that proves effective and promotes health and well-being is often the most efficient and effective of all treatments available, but is often difficult to achieve for many reasons:

- The average Canadian over 65 is taking 10 medications.
- Many medications prescribed for older adults can cause confusion, memory loss and other side-effects.
- About half of patients with long-term conditions do not take their medications as prescribed.

Giving patients advice about their medicines is an important element of self management. However, for patients to take true control of their medications, they need fast and convenient access to advise about how to properly take them, info on potential side effects and involvement in decisions about their medications.

## Regular interventions are key

A collaborative model of support involves the implementation of regular initiatives that are customized to meet the needs of the patient and the family. Some programs you may find in your community

- **increased self-management education.** With the help of a professional, a patient can

receive disease-specific education, set goals and learn strategies to improve their health.

- **telehealth home care**—using wireless technology, nurses and clients are able to remotely monitor blood pressure, pulse, glucose, cholesterol and weight.
- **workplace education** and monthly wellness clinics in pharmacies on specific diseases and conditions help people understand their conditions.
- **in-home nursing assessments** provide one-on-one support and education.
- **immunization clinics**—flu, pneumonia, travel vaccines, hepatitis—help significantly to prevent illness.

There are numerous health care providers who have a wonderful history of working together to promote the health and well-being of clients in the community. Managing a chronic illness effectively all starts with someone saying “I need help!” The first step is to be accountable for your own health. Contact your neighbourhood pharmacist, nurse, public health office or support group and learn what you can do. Knowledge is the key to successfully managing a chronic condition.

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## Living with chronic disease *continued from cover*

at home and research shows that, when their conditions are well managed, people are actually happier and healthier.

The challenge then for the patient, family, physician, and community health professionals is to work as a collaborative team to understand the effects of the condition and to effectively manage patient's care. What will be needed and who will provide it? Who will be on the care team? Which medications are necessary and

what, if any, are the side-effects? What support, education and treatment are needed?

For people with long term conditions, self-care management and monitoring becomes increasingly important to maintain independence and quality of life.

Supporting self care and self management is about more than giving patients information about their condition. It is about acknowledging their central role in managing their own care and

empowering them, their family and caregivers to handle their condition as effectively as possible. With disease-specific education programs, peer support and advice regarding medications, health care professionals can encourage and support people to confidently take better care of themselves. This results in not only more efficient use of precious health care resources but also better health outcomes for individuals themselves.

# Supporting loved ones in long-term care

It is not always the case when someone is diagnosed with a chronic illness, but in some circumstances, individuals may require long-term care assistance. When a chronic condition, trauma or illness limits an individual's ability to stay independent and carry out basic self-care, assisted living or long-term care becomes an option.

## When care is needed

Specifically, permanent, residential care is needed when activities of daily living such as bathing, eating or dressing, or instrumental activities of daily living like household chores, become unmanageable. Facility-based care can involve complete round-the-clock medical and personal care, or can provide on-going support and a menu of additional services to meet a patient's needs.



## The best help

Subsequently, retirement residences, assisted living and long-term care facilities offer varying degrees of support. Part of supporting someone living in a long-term care facility is ensuring they get the best attention and medical help possible. Adjustment to life at a facility can be difficult

for all concerned. Because they know the patient's preferences, idiosyncrasies and routines better than anyone else, family members frequently find themselves worrying a lot and struggling to meet their loved ones' individual comfort and care needs.

## Opting for extra help

In many cases with chronic illness or disability, subsequent, permanent physical and personality changes can happen, which require a great deal of time and attention. This can be incredibly stressful and difficult on family and friends trying to care for the patient and puts a significant strain on the long-term care facility's resources.

## Additional care and support

Often, based on their resident's needs and the availability of on-staff help, families opt to arrange for additional nursing care. This may mean involving an outside nursing agency. A professional secondary caregiver can offer the extra hands-on help as well as the knowledge required to accurately treat and manage the patient's illness.



## Common concerns the family may have about their loved one include

- knowing how to recognize and respond to changes in a chronic disease
- dealing with problems and emergencies
- using medicines and treatments effectively
- getting enough exercise
- coping with fatigue, pain and sleep problems
- maintaining good nutrition
- making decisions about when to seek medical help
- working with doctor(s) and other care providers
- discussing care with family and friends
- managing social activities

Professional caregivers can reduce stress and are equipped to take a lot of the weight off the family caregiver by providing the personal attention that ensures quality care.

## Where to search

A number of respected, condition-specific, Canadian organizations can provide valuable information. Here are a few suggestions:

**Heart and stroke**  
[www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)

**Arthritis**  
[www.arthritis.ca](http://www.arthritis.ca)

**Osteoporosis**  
[www.osteoporosis.ca](http://www.osteoporosis.ca)

**Cancer**  
[www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)

**Parkinson's disease**  
[www.parkinson.ca](http://www.parkinson.ca)

**Respiratory health**  
[www.lung.ca](http://www.lung.ca)

**Alzheimer's**  
[www.alzheimer.ca](http://www.alzheimer.ca)

**Diabetes**  
[www.diabetes.ca](http://www.diabetes.ca)

**Mental health**  
[www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)

## Attention caregivers

Ask for your complimentary copy of *Solutions*<sup>®</sup> magazine, courtesy of your local We Care Home Health Services location. Visit [www.wecare.ca](http://www.wecare.ca) or call 1-800-605-0916.





## Tips for managing your chronic illness

### Get the facts

Knowing more about your condition will help you to feel more comfortable and in control.

### Find good supports

Friends and family may be a valuable source of support. Ask your doctor or check the web or phone book to find organizations that specialize in your disease.

### Talk to others

Others with similar challenges can be a great source of support and strength. Look for a local or online support group. Your doctor, the web, hospitals and community organizations are good places to check.

### Be an active partner

Get involved in directing your own care. You know your history, your needs and what it's like to live with your illness on a day to day basis.

### Take care of yourself

Get the recommended amount of exercise, eat well and get plenty of rest.

### Learn to manage symptoms

Discover what works best for you. Pay attention to what makes things better or worse. Find out what soothes you, what relieves discomfort and what lifts your mood. Keep a diary.

# Ask our experts

*Forward your questions or comments, and we'll ask our experienced nursing team to provide you with the latest advice and information.*

*We're nervous because grandma is being sent home with an I.V. What should we expect?*

Before a person is discharged home with an I.V., they are assessed to ensure that they are appropriate candidates. Questions the discharge nurse may ask include: Are they capable and willing to learn? Do they live in a city or a rural settings? Is the person lucid or confused at times? How often is the intravenous required? And, is there someone who is able to help the individual? The registered nurse will set-up the I.V. and monitor it to ensure that there are no problems. Some I.V.s today are operated by an automatic pump, where a small and controlled amount of fluid is released into the blood stream every minute. If there is a problem, a little alarm sounds and the person is instructed to press a button and call the nurse. It would be wise for a family member to be with grandma when the nurse does the first visit. This joint visit provides an opportunity to review expectations, what unusual signs to be aware of and who to call if help is needed.

*My son spent his day off shuttling grandma to the doctor's because I was working. Is there a community service that can help us?*

Your mom is lucky to have such a considerate grandson who is willing to help her out. Nonetheless, many communities have a transportation service to assist the elderly

to get to their appointments (e.g., Wheeltrans, Transhelp) Your local info line, hospital or government home care may be able to provide you with information. You could also go online to your city or town's website. Every agency will have their own criteria for applicants and a fee is usually required. Depending on the nature of your mother's illness, the local cancer society or other disease-related agencies may provide transportation.

*Does medical insurance cover 24-hour nursing care when dad comes home from the hospital?*

Every insurance policy is unique, so you will need to thoroughly read his policy to find out what services are covered. Call the insurance office before you arrange nursing services, because sometimes you will need to receive authorization prior to hiring a nurse. Some insurance companies have an arrangement with a specific nursing agency and only that agency is authorized to provide care. Often a doctor's report is required to ensure that the care required can only be delivered by a nurse. Another consideration is if your policy stipulates service by a registered nurse or a registered practical nurse. Most insurance companies will ask that you first check with your government home care program to see if your dad qualifies for services that are already paid for through your provincial health insurance program.

Send your questions to Sue Kelly, RN, PHN, at [skelly@wecarecanada.com](mailto:skelly@wecarecanada.com)



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