



## Caring For A Loved One From A Distance

By Diane Walker, RN, MS

Increasingly it's a fact of life and a challenge for approximately 5 to 7 million Americans: you live miles away from an ailing, vulnerable family member for whom you provide care. The number of adults involved in distance caregiving is expected to double over the next 15 years. Expectations of family members by the Federal government and health care providers that you assure the care recipient's health and welfare will also continue to rise, often at the expense of your career and family.

Here are a few tips to consider.

1. Be sensitive to your loved one's views and attempt to gain his/her full cooperation. This may require more than one conversation to find out what s/he needs and will accept .
2. Take it a step at a time. Begin by honestly identifying what you can and cannot do considering your current responsibilities, strengths and limitations.
3. Learn as much as you can about your loved one's medical, financial, and legal situation. Make a determination about your loved one's ability to remain at home safely.
4. Use a team approach and don't try to go it alone. Involve other family members, neighbors, clergy and friends. Order a local phone book and obtain a list of local services.
5. Identify services that someone else in the community can provide like meal delivery, assistance with activities of daily living (ADLs), transportation, etc.
6. Take care of yourself. Learn how to set limits for yourself and say, "help, yes, and here is a list of what would be helpful. Pick one or two you'd like to do."
7. Get important documents in place like a will, durable power of attorney and a living will or advance directive.

(Continued on page 3)

### **GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE and The National MS Society Pilot New Self-study Course**

### **Caregivers Receive National Awards For Outstanding Service** by Veronica Wathome

In 2005, *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* launched its new Disabilities Division and began working with the National MS Society (NMSS) to develop a self-study curriculum for professional Caregivers. The project was undertaken to assure Clients that they would receive high quality, customized services appropriate to their disability.

The curriculum is now being piloted in Pennsylvania, Colorado and California through selected *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* Offices and local MS Chapters. One hundred and fifty Caregivers will complete the course prior to national distribution through the NMSS.

The course should be available to all Caregivers referred by *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* once the pilot phase is completed.

*GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* launched an Annual National Caregiver Award program in 2005. The program recognizes outstanding Caregivers who consistently exceed the Client's expectations. The goal of the program is to recognize outstanding service and to show appreciation and gratitude to the more than 9000 Caregivers nationally. The award program is also consistent with the company's commitment to improving the image of professional

(Continued on page 3)

#### **Special points of interest:**

- *Name Your Beneficiaries* Pg. 2
- *New Website* on Pg. 2
- *Medicare Tests Pay For Performance* Pg. 2

## Medicare Tests New Pay For Performance Reimbursement System

by Diane Walker, RN, MS

Medicare wants to align its incentives with better health outcomes for its 43 million members according to a new report issued by the Institute of Medicine (IOM). "Medicare is not getting the best value for the \$320 billion it spends to purchase services annually. We reward high volumes of service, not care that meets professionally recommended standards of care. We are recommending a pay for performance (P4P) system that rewards providers for delivering high quality care efficiently." (IOM, 2006)

Not everyone is excited about the idea. According to a spokesperson for the American Hospital Association, the government will have to anti up more money for them to play. "If hospitals are already losing money treating Medicare patients, there's no incentive if you're going to fund the rewards by further cutting payments." A representative of the American Medical Association states, "Congress must provide

Medicare with additional funding so that Medicare patients' current access to care is not jeopardized by cuts that force physicians to make difficult practice decisions." (Medical News Today, 2006)

If the recommendations in the report are implemented, some of the changes we might see include: development of performance measures that reliably define good care and optimal outcomes; care that is patient-centered and efficient; reimbursement for patient education and counseling; public reporting of provider performance; and caregivers rewarded for their successful care coordination activities.

The use of performance measures isn't a new idea. The IOM report notes that many P4P measures have been implemented in the last ten years but evidence-based results aren't available yet. There is also concern that if implemented too quickly, P4P could have negative effects like physicians avoiding certain patients and withdrawing from Medicare. The plan is to pilot the new system and phase it in over the next three years allowing time for evaluation and voluntary participation. At that time, the Secretary of Health and Human Services will decide whether to require mandatory participation for all providers.

You can review an overview of the report at:

<http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3809/19805/37232.aspx>

## CARING TIMES© Launches A New Website

CARING TIMES©, which won a Mature Media Award for 2006, recently launched a website designed to meet the educational needs of family Caregivers. The website features current and past editions of CARING TIMES©, informative articles about topics of interest to older adults, people living with a disability and family Caregivers, and links to national advocacy organizations.

The website will also make several experts

available to personally answer your individual questions about aging and elder care, dementia and Alzheimer's Disease, MS, ALS, spinal injury, arthritis, and working with a professional caregiver, for example.

Access to the website is **FREE** and you can visit at *your* convenience. If you want to receive copies of the entire newsletter twice a year via email, you can also subscribe at the website. Visit us at [www.CaringTimes.org](http://www.CaringTimes.org).

## Have You Designated A Beneficiary On Your Insurance Policies and IRAs?

According to Karen Hube, who writes for AARP and the Wall Street Journal, spouses and children can have a very unwelcome surprise when their loved one dies. Most families plan for the financial future of survivors, but they may overlook some very important details that can have significant financial consequences.

Patricia O'Malley, RN, Esq. discussed the importance of having a will in her article, "Protecting Yourself And Your Loved Ones." (CT, Fall, 2004) People just assume that if they have a will, their beneficiaries will receive their accumulated assets according to the distribution plan specified in the will. This may not be true if they haven't designated beneficiaries on retirement accounts and life insurance policies. Beneficiaries on these instruments override a will. If no one is designated, the assets go to the estate, not the person you

may have intended. New IRS rulings can help defer mandatory cash-outs of IRAs within five years of the death and prevent the loss of accumulated growth. But it's best not to leave the beneficiary undesignated. Families in which divorce and separation have occurred are even more at risk for the distribution failing to occur as planned. If you haven't reviewed your policy and insurance documents in the last few years, it's wise to do it now rather than later.

AARP, January and February 2005

## National Caregiver Awards *continued...*

*(Continued from page 1)*

Caregivers within the home care industry. Recipients received a commemorative certificate and an award. This years recipients are:

**Ruthie M.** - the *Angel* Award in recognition for personal and professional contributions towards the betterment of his/her local community.

**Sandra Y. and Kwadwo B.** - the *Grapevine* Award in recognition for the most number of referrals of Clients or Caregivers to an Office in the last year

**Hazel T.** - the *Pinch Hitter* Award in recognition for consistent availability at the last minute for referrals, working beyond their scheduled time, and accepting challenging referrals.

**Laura V.** - the *CAP* award in recognition for the highest number of accepted referrals and participation in the last year.

**Brenda W.** - the *Sirius* Award given to a Caregiver who

has joined the registry in the last year and who has provided excellent service.

**Samira K. and John O.** - the *Phoenix* Award in recognition for the willingness to work through difficult service situations thereby earning credibility and praise for their efforts.

**Royce E.** - the *Monarch* Award in recognition for personal, professional, educational or social self-development efforts in the past year.

**Nancy N.** - the *Bell Flower* Award in recognition for the highest number of Client commendations for his/her quality of service provided in the last year.

Nominees who received certificates of Honorable Mention are:

**Beverly B.** for the Angel Award

**Angela W.** for the Monarch Award

**Eugenia M.** for the Bell Flower Award.

Congratulations to all the nominees!

## It's Time To Get Vaccinated!

*By Diane Walker MS, RN*

It's a fact: according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), "the single best way to prevent yourself from getting the flu is to *get vaccinated every fall.*" (1) In the United States, flu season usually starts in December and can last until March. Each year more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications including pneumonia, dehydration, and worsening medical conditions such as congestive heart failure and asthma. About 36,000 deaths occur each year from the flu. (2) While anyone can get the flu, adults 65 years and older and people with diabetes, spinal cord injury, MS, ALS, and compromised respiratory function are especially at risk. Caregivers are also at greater risk because of association with their care recipient.

Flu symptoms include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, nausea and vomiting. If you get the flu, rest, drink lots of fluids except alcohol, and consult with your doctor about medications that relieve the symptoms of the flu. Better yet, get a flu shot and *stay* healthy!

(1) CDC (2005). Key Facts About Influenza and Influenza Vaccine. [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).

(2) CDC (2005). Influenza: The Disease. [www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease.htm).

## Distance Caregiving *continued...*

*(Continued from page 1)*

8. Create a notebook where you keep a medical history and medication record.

9. Explore your loved one's eligibility for government programs and long-term care insurance benefits.

10. Plan on being flexible because conditions change and you need to change your plans accordingly.

It's normal to feel guilty and anxious when you are away from the care recipient but these emotions can also be exhausting. Identify a person you can rely on for objectivity and talk with them often. Plan on regular periods of respite and take time away from your caregiving responsibilities. Taking care of yourself is another way of taking care of your loved one.

Here are some resources for more information:

- ◆ MetLife Mature Market Institute, Resources for Caregivers at [www.maturemarketinstitute.com](http://www.maturemarketinstitute.com).
- ◆ National Family Caregivers Association at [www.nfcacares.org](http://www.nfcacares.org).
- ◆ The John Hartford Foundation, Long-Distance Caregiving at [www.caregiverresource.net/materials.htm](http://www.caregiverresource.net/materials.htm)



**GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE**

**Corporate Office  
717 Bethlehem Pike  
Suite 300  
Erdenheim, PA 19038**

Phone: 888-777-7630  
Fax: 215-402-0202  
Email: [diane@GriswoldSpecialCare.com](mailto:diane@GriswoldSpecialCare.com)

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**Find Us On The Web At [www.CaringTimes.org](http://www.CaringTimes.org).**

GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE

The **CARINGTIMES**® newsletter and its companion website are a service GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE offers to Clients, family caregivers, and professionals who care for older adults and individuals living with a disability. Experts in gerontology keep you current with helpful articles, legislative updates, tips on caregiving, news about organizations and more.



**On-line Caregiving Resources**

Our website ([www.CaringTimes.org](http://www.CaringTimes.org)) includes a resource center that is designed to help make it easier for you to care for your loved ones in the home. At this site, you will have access to past newsletters, articles about elder care and disability issues, direct access to experts who you can talk with about your personal issues and concerns, and links to national organizations that offer support to family Caregivers. Check the website each month for the latest information. Here are some of the features that are currently posted:

- ◆ A brochure to prevent falls at home
- ◆ Welcoming A Caregiver Into Your Home
- ◆ Preventing Caregiver Burnout
- ◆ Tax Related Issues
- ◆ Legal Documents: POA and Living Wills
- ◆ Dementia: The Disease and New Hope for Treatment, Parts I and II
- ◆ Home and Community Based Care: What Consumers Want And Need

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