



Falls Are The Primary Cause of Accidental Death In Older Adults: Let's Prevent Them *by Diane Walker, R.N., M.S.*

Overview—Falls are the *most common* life-threatening hazard to the health status and independence of adults over the age of 65. In the US, one of every three persons over age 65 living in the community falls each year, with the incidence of falls increasing to 50% in those over 80 years of age. Two-thirds of adults who fall will fall again within six months.

In the same population of adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths and can result in head and soft tissue trauma and fractures. Among those adults who fracture a hip, more than 75% are women. Over half of adults hospitalized for hip fracture cannot return home or live independently again.

In addition to physical injury and nursing home care, the fear of repeated falls often restricts travel, shopping, attending church and social functions, resulting in social isolation and depression. Elders even avoid essential activities in the home including mobility, bathing and meal preparation.

Causes—Falls are not a normal part of the aging process. Failing to recognize this fact diminishes efforts by family caregivers to prevent them.

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GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE Receives Award

By Dot Folz, Ed.M.

Advocacy Today: The Need For Criminal Checks

by Fiona F. Middleton, MSM

Throughout its 21-year history, *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* has been recognized in many ways. However, when Today's Caregiver Magazine, a national publication dedicated to assisting family caregivers, recognized *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* with the magazine's first annual **Caregiver Friendly Award**, it was truly special.

The magazine, which provides information and support for thousands of family caregivers throughout the country, began the search over a year ago to discover and recognize "the nation's best" in four categories: media programs, books or periodicals, products, and service.

As America ages, people increasingly rely on paid caregivers to take care of themselves or the family they love. Many people opt to use an agency for paid services, rather than risk hiring a stranger from the newspaper. People make such choices to guarantee a degree of safety for family members.

However, because of varying state laws, not all agencies are mandated to conduct criminal background checks. Even when agencies choose to exceed state regulations, they often face accessibility problems and

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GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE received the award

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Special points of interest:

- *New Benefit For Family Caregivers, Pg. 2*
- *NFCA Program For Caregivers., Pg. 2*
- *Children of Aging Parents, Pg. 2*
- *Free Email Subscription And Web Access Pg. 4*

A NEW BENEFIT FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS—The Caregivers Marketplace™ – A free service providing cash back and discounts along with information for family caregivers *by Dot Folz, Ed.M.*

If you are a caregiver, you know only too well that Medicare or private insurance does not cover many of the products family caregivers use every day. It is not unusual to spend over \$2,000 a year or more out-of-pocket for health care products to assist with daily activities.

We appreciate that it is expensive to be a family caregiver and therefore *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* is pleased to announce a collaborative partnership with **The Caregivers Marketplace™**. Membership is Free and savings can add up to 15% or more on products used for incontinence, nutrition, bathing, skin care and more. Brands include Ensure®, TENA®, Boost®, Comfort Bath, Attends® and No Rinse®. When someone enrolls they receive the ***Cash Back, Discount and Resource Guide***. They then purchase whatever they need, wherever they like – so they can always shop for the best price. Once purchased, they save and mail in the receipts, and receive their cash back Rebate Check.

Another benefit of the program is Revenue Sharing. Over and above

the dollars received back for purchases, periodically revenue sharing dollars are sent to collaborative partners like *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE*. In the case of *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* all monies will go directly to The Special Care Fund. This non-profit fund assists persons in need of care but lacking in the financial means. To qualify for these dollars, a person must enter *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE*'s code when they sign up for membership: **GSCCP** If someone visits our web site www.home-care.net, scrolls down to **The Caregivers Marketplace™** icon, and signs up on line the code will automatically be added. Applications are also available by calling 215-402-0200 or your local *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* office.

“Communicating Effectively With Health Care Professionals”: A New Program By NFCA *by Diane Walker, RN, MS*

The National Family Caregivers Association has developed a program that helps family caregivers examine their experience with the health care system, identify needed skills to communicate effectively with health care professionals, and gain respect as a valued member of the health care team.

In response to repeated requests for help in advocating for loved ones, the program's model and terrific tools help caregivers plan ahead for encounters with professionals. It is difficult to advocate for loved ones when faced with anxiety provoking situations, especially emergencies. The 3-hour program gives caregivers the opportunity to express frustrations, learn ways to

communicate that work *for*, not against, them so they get what they need, and practice using effective communication tools in a safe environment. Here is what one attendee had to say, *“It is an empowering workshop for caregivers of all varieties. I came away with an abundance of positive tools for dealing with the caregiving process and health care providers more effectively.”* LV

To learn more about the program and where you can attend in a city near you, contact NFCA at 301-942-6430. For upcoming programs in the Philadelphia area, contact *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* at 888-777-7630.

Children Of Aging Parents (CAPS)

CAPS is a nonprofit charitable organization whose mission is to assist the nation's nearly 54 million caregivers of the elderly or chronically ill. **CAPS** provides reliable information, referrals, support and works to inform the public that the health of the family caregivers is vital to assuring quality care for the nation's growing elderly population. **CAPS** began in Levittown, Pennsylvania in 1977 and incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1980. **CAPS** utilizes the broadcast and print media to improve the public's understanding of caregiving and issues of aging by, among other things, producing fact sheets and publishing a quarterly newsletter filled with news and

advice. **CAPS** refers caregivers to appropriate support groups anywhere in the US and encourages the formation of new, **CAPS**-affiliated groups. **CAPS** provides start-up training and on-going support to interested parties. **CAPS** also sends speakers to the work place through a company's Employee Assistance Program. To reach **CAPS**, call 800-227-7294; visit: www.CAPS4caregivers.org; Email: admin@caps4caregivers.org.

Falls" continued

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Many of the causes of falls can be prevented or reduced by addressing these six key risk factors:

- ◆ **Osteoporosis**—As adults age, their bones become more less dense and more prone to stress. This condition, more common among women, is caused by hormonal changes, calcium and vitamin D deficiencies, and decreased physical activity.
- ◆ **Lack of Physical Activity**—The ability to maintain a stable upright position, ambulate and rise from a chair with balance is a complex process requiring muscle tone, strength and flexibility.
- ◆ **Impaired Vision**—Vision plays an extremely important role in balance and the ability to avoid obstacles. Declining visual ability impairs depth perception, adaptation to light and dark, and the ability to perceive object contrast and spatial detail.
- ◆ **Poly-Pharmacia**—The use of four or more drugs or beginning a new drug, side-effects of medications and the following types of drugs greatly increases the risk of falling: anti-depressants, sedatives, anti-hypertensives and cardiac meds, and alcohol consumption.
- ◆ **Environmental Hazards**—Approximately 35% of all falls involve environmental hazards in the home. These hazards include clutter, throw rugs, poor lighting, unsafe stairways, electrical cords, inappropriate furniture, slippery surfaces and the lack of bathroom grab bars and safety mats in the tub.
- ◆ **Medical Conditions**—Falls can be a signal of poor health and declining function. 50% of falls are caused by medical conditions including arthritis, stroke, dementia, heart disease, peripheral neuropathy, Parkinson's syndrome, low blood pressure and foot disorders.

What You Can Do—While some falls are accidental, they should raise a red flag and initiate further evaluation. Here are three actions you can take to reduce or eliminate your own or a loved one's risk of injury and death:

- ◆ Have a *thorough* medical and ophthalmologic examination;
- ◆ Engage in weight-bearing and flexibility exercises daily;
- ◆ Conduct a walk-through of the home to identify safety problems; and
- ◆ Make sure you are getting correct amounts of calcium and vitamin D.

Visit our website resource center for tools you can use to evaluate the home and other simple tests to determine someone's risk of falling.

Award continued

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in the service category that acknowledges companies for providing "easily accessible and truly caregiver friendly services."

"GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE strives to promote independence," said Fiona Middleton, Vice President. "An important aspect of the care we provide is permitting the family to always be in control. Care is customized to each person's individual needs, and is provided by Caregivers that exceed industry standards. This is accomplished while, keeping to our founder Jean Griswold's wishes, rates are kept as low as possible." The award was presented at The Sharing Wisdom Conference in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

Advocacy continued

prohibitive costs.

While some states have easy-to-use, on-line access, others have closed systems that forbid public access or restrict access to local, county checks. Although many states do permit access to statewide criminal record checks, national checks are usually not required and are difficult to obtain.

The price of criminal checks varies by state. A statewide check can cost as much as \$25 per individual and more than twice that for a national FBI check. These are costs that are eventually passed on to consumers.

How can you help to change the process? Ask your elected officials how much their parent's safety is worth. Urge them to require *free* national criminal checks for all care providers. Advocate for instant national internet access. And insist that your home care company conduct such checks.

For help in advocacy efforts, or for the telephone numbers of your local legislators, call your local *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* office today.

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CARING TIMES and Its Companion Web Page Services

GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE

CARING TIMES

The **CARING TIMES** newsletter and its companion online version are a service **GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE** offers to clients and family caregivers. Experts in elder care keep you current with helpful articles, legislative

updates, tips on caregiving, news about organizations that can help you and more. The issues will be available either online at www.home-care.net/resources or through your local office.

On-line Caregiving Resources

We have enhanced our online website to include a resource

center. Each month, a new article about providing care in the home is posted to the **GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE** website at www.home-care.net/resources. At this site, you will also have access to past articles and other features designed to help make it easier for you to provide and arrange for care in the home. Check the website each month for the latest information. If you would like to suggest a topic for the newsletter, you can do that on-line as well.

If you would like to **automatically** receive issues of the newsletter via email, you can subscribe on-line at the website. Just click on the Resource Center and go through the link to complete your subscription. Don't forget the subscription is **FREE!**

