VNS pays tribute to our patients and employees during the month of November!

A Message from VNS Board President and Director of the Ithaca College Gerontology Institute, Rhoda Meador:

As we grow older or encounter increasing health challenges, most of us agree on a common goal—staying home as long as possible to avoid costly and undesirable hospital and nursing home stays. Home care services in our local community play an essential role in helping us reach this goal by enhancing health and promoting independence. We are fortunate in our community to have Visiting Nurse Service of Ithaca & Tompkins County, where home health care is about more than physical well-being: it's about relationships, compassion, support and trust.

Generally, home care is appropriate whenever a person prefers to stay at home but needs ongoing care that cannot easily or effectively be provided solely by family and friends. Home care services are utilized by people of all ages and backgrounds, but they are predominantly used by older people to treat acute illnesses, chronic health conditions and permanent disabilities. Home care encompasses a wide range of health and social services including nursing, therapeutic treatments and assistance with essential activities of daily living.

Home care enables people to receive a variety of essential medical treatments in the comfort of their homes, ranging from monitoring for congestive heart failure to physical therapy to diabetes medications. Though these types of services were once only offered in a hospital or physician's office, now thanks to innovative technologies and greater coordination among care providers, they can be delivered safely, effectively and efficiently in the home by skilled caregivers.

In November, as we celebrate National Home Care and Hospice Month, we have the opportunity to honor all the home care administrators and workers who make such a remarkable difference in the lives of the patients and families they serve here in our local community. We thank them for being such a vital part of keeping their patients safely and comfortably at home.

-VNS Board President
-Director, Ithaca College Gerontology Institute

Rhoda Meador
PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, home care services provide high quality and compassionate health care services to those in need, especially at times of community and personal health care crises, and

WHEREAS, home care is the most preferred method of health care delivery among disabled, elderly, and chronically ill individuals eager to live independently in their own homes as long as they possibly can, and

WHEREAS, home care services allows families to stay together, and provide for greater health, dignity, and comfort in our communities, and

WHEREAS, home care in the United States is a growing alternative to hospitalization or other institution-based forms of health care for acute and chronic illnesses, providing care to millions of Americans each year, and

WHEREAS, thousands of everyday heroes such as home care nurses, therapists, and aides work tirelessly to provide professional health and palliative care and support to millions of Americans in need of quality health services, and

WHEREAS, these dedicated home care professionals and volunteers form a support network that continues to play a vital role in health care delivery for our nation’s disabled, infirm, and aging population, and

WHEREAS, those entities in Tompkins County providing these vital services are Lifelong, Tompkins County Office for the Aging, Ithaca College Gerontology Institute, Longview, Visiting Nurse Service, Hospicare, Tompkins County Health Department, Finger Lakes Independence Center, Franziska Rackner Center, Tompkins County Department of Social Services, Caregivers, Comfort Keepers, Classen Home Health Associates, Starkings, Redmoon, Brookdale Senior Living, and Family and Children’s Respite Program, and

WHEREAS, the National Association for Home Care and Hospice, and thousands of home care agencies across the United States have declared the month of November 2014 as National Home Care Month and are calling on all Americans to observe this occasion with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Michael E. Lane, Chair of the Tompkins County Legislature, do hereby proclaim November 2014 as:

HOME CARE MONTH IN TOMPKINS COUNTY

and encourage the support and participation of all citizens in learning more about the home care and hospice concepts of care for the elderly, disabled, and infirm.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the great seal of Tompkins County, State of New York, on this 6th day of November, 2014.

Michael E. Lane, Chair
Tompkins County Legislature
Caregiver
By Lee McCurley

I am the caregiver, the watcher, the guide,
I walk down the hall with you by my side.
A smile, a laugh, a hug or embrace,
I watch the worry fall away from your face.
I am the caregiver, the watcher, the guide,
I walk down the hall with you by my side.
I am your compass, your shining North Star,
I try to remind you of just who you are.
I am the caretaker, the watcher, the guide,
I walk down the hall with you by my side.
Pictures and letters, music of old
Keep your mind warm and away from the cold.
I am the caregiver, the watcher, the guide,
I walk down the hall with you by my side.
The routine of night shows no wear and tear,
The light of the morning so soon will be here.

A VNS employee takes a moment to pose for a picture while caring for one of her patients.

A VNS long term care patient writes in her own words what having home care services means to her:

Homecare means to me:
The ability to live independently and receive Home Health Aide services Every morning to help me shower/Bathe, get dressed so as I can continue on with my daily activities. I also have a Homecare nurse and between the aide and the nurse, they help me stay healthy enough to keep me from going into the hospital or losing my independence and going into a nursing home. I have also worked with an occupational therapist to try and make things in my apartment more accessible home, or making my transfers to and from my wheelchair easier and safer.

By Tina Champion

Tina Champion and Norma LoParco
AMC Health/Telehealth

This year the theme of Home Care & Hospice Month is “Home Is the Center of Health Care.” While many people still associate healthcare services with hospitals, physician’s offices and clinics, it’s time to change our perceptions. Currently, three out of four older adults have one chronic medical condition, more than half have two or more chronic conditions and 11 million Americans live with five or more chronic conditions. Unfortunately, only one-third of those diagnosed with diabetes, hypertension and elevated cholesterol levels have these conditions well controlled. This means that their home—not the hospital—is fast becoming their healthcare “Mission Control.”

The good news is that Visiting Nurse Service of Ithaca and Tompkins County has the ability to monitor the health of patients on a consistent basis at home, rather than just sporadically during office visits to help our patients maintain their health and independence.

Our telehealth technology partner, AMC Health, has made it very easy for physicians, nurses, care managers and other clinicians to keep a watchful eye over patients who need it -- even when patients are between home visits. AMC Health collaborates with our care management team and provides the technology, logistics and clinical support services for in-home monitoring to capture symptoms and key data such as blood pressure, pulse, temperature, incremental changes in weight, blood glucose levels, heart rate and others for patients with chronic diseases and conditions like diabetes, heart failure, hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) among others.

AMC Health provides a wide-range of easy-to-use, Bluetooth-enabled monitoring devices such as scales, blood pressure monitors, glucometers, heart rate monitors, pill boxes with reminders and tracking – that continually capture and automatically transmit data so it can be analyzed using evidence-based best practices to identify potential problems. When this occurs, a nurse or another caregiver is notified to determine if an intervention is needed to prevent a potential problem from becoming a serious concern.

None of this requires any complicated set-up, or even knowledge of technology on the part of our patients or their caregivers. Once it’s in place no one has to write down any readings, connect any wires or remember to call anything in.

While the alerts are important, what’s also valuable to our patients is that the telehealth technology provides their clinicians with a more complete picture of their health. Instead of taking a “snapshot” when patients have a home visit, clinicians can receive data every day. This ongoing view enables them to understand what is “normal” for that individual rather than relying on a general standard. More data points combined with analytics also help clinicians to spot trends long before they would become evident through traditional in-office monitoring.

What this means is that this year’s theme for Home Care & Hospice Week, “Home Is the Center of Health Care” is a reality for many of our patients. Our ability to offer AMC Health’s real-time patient management solutions is helping them live more active and productive lives by helping them manage their chronic conditions at home.

At Visiting Nurse Service of Ithaca and Tompkins County, we do what we do because we care deeply about those we serve. We have a passion for constantly trying to improve the quality of the services we offer, which in turn improves the chances that our patients will enjoy an improved quality of life. During Home Care & Hospice Month, and indeed throughout the year, we thank our nurses and other caregivers for their dedication and compassion and hope you will do the same.

Sincerely,
Sue Ellen Stuart
Executive Director

Please visit AMC Health at their website, www.amchealth.com
Falls Prevention Program

Visiting Nurse Service has participated in the Falls Prevention Program sponsored by the Office of the Aging. Each of our clinicians and Home Health Aides conduct a Fall Risk Assessment when they enter a patient’s home. The patient or caregiver is then counseled on how to make corrections in order to prevent accidental falls.

Tompkins County Office for the Aging Falls Prevention Website
VNS Falls Prevention Website

Visiting Nurse Service is fortunate to have a Physical Therapist, Scott Kobziewicz, who has been specially trained in Vestibular Dysfunction. This is one of the many conditions that can cause dizziness symptoms which can lead to loss of balance and increased incidence of falls. Physical Therapists can evaluate patients for this condition and effectively treat and help patients manage symptoms which can affect patient’s mobility, safety and independence. They will work with patients to help them manage these symptoms, improve their mobility, and ultimately improve patient’s independence and safety.

The body maintains its balance with sensory information provided from 3 different systems—vision, proprioception and vestibular systems, which supply information about the body’s spatial orientation.

The eyes provide visual input; the skin, muscles and joints provide sensory reception (proprioception); and the vestibular system, which is located in the inner ear, provides motion, equilibrium and spatial orientation. Problems with the vestibular system can be caused by many factors and can lead to dizziness, loss of balance and ultimately lead to an increased incidence of falls. Vestibular rehabilitation is an exercise-based program designed to promote central nervous system compensation for inner ear deficits.

Vestibular rehabilitation is performed by a physical therapist who will evaluate and assess posture, balance and gait, and then develop an individualized treatment plan for each patient’s overall function and safety. They also work with patients to help retrain the brain to recognize and process input from the vestibular system and coordinate with input from vision and proprioception systems.

Look for our next quarterly newsletter in Spring 2015!
Sign up for our mailing list:
http://www.vnsithaca.org/contact.html

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