

# A Closer Look At Geriatric Care Management



By Mary Peters, Owner and Geriatric Care Manager at Care for Life

Geriatric Care Management is a stand-alone profession created in the 1980's to help older people and their families in solving problems of aging and illness. There are specific qualifications, educational and professional criteria and a national exam to pass to become a Geriatric Care Manager.

Geriatric Care Management is a systematic process of assessment, care planning, referrals and monitoring. Geriatric Care Managers are nurses, social workers, psychologists and occupational therapists all trained especially to provide solutions to improve the safety, quality and independence of their older client.

In the 1980's these professionals worked in hospitals and care facilities as managers of geriatric patients. They saw that there was much to be done outside of these institutions and set up individual practices in their communities.

Shifts in health care from facilities to communities rapidly began to occur in the 1980's. These reasons included: increasing growth trends in our older population, advanced medical treatments and public awareness that institutional programs did not meet the needs of older persons and their families.

Care for Life was founded in 1995 with the standards of geriatric care management. We combine coordination of health care with other needed services such as: home care, caregivers, activities of daily living, socialization, housing recommendations, referrals to medical specialties, and legal planning.

Following the national standards, our process is: Complete assessment with interaction from the client and family members, write a care plan, to provide referrals and resources, and ongoing monitoring of care.

## The Assessment

A geriatric care management assessment is made, with the family and elderly client, which includes health and social history, functional status, fall risk assessment, medication profile and other tests if requested. Liaison to primary care physician is made and the care manager may accompany the client to their physician.

## The Care Plan

Geriatric Care Managers then complete a written care plan to coordinate services according to the goals and issues the elderly person and family members describe. Some of these may be a desire to stay safely in their home, home care, finding a suitable facility, medication management, help with doctor appointments, health problem management, transpor-

ation, and assistance with activities of daily living. Care for Life also offers scheduled risk management visits for the frail client in their home.

## Resources and Referrals

Care For Life provides daily resources and referrals to anyone seeking a service or recommendation for an older parent or relative. Our mission is to help all older people get to the health professional, facility or source of information they are looking for. Requests for information are often related to funding sources, housing, specialty physicians, support groups, or finding assistance in other parts of the country.

## Monitoring Care

Follow up on the care plan and the older persons progress is one of the most important jobs for the care manager. Monitoring is Quality Assurance, provided through ongoing visits and communication with the family and the older client.

## Circumstances in which you may need a Geriatric Care Manager:

- Adult children struggle to work and take care of a parent.
- An older person is not safe alone but refuses care.
- The family is concerned about leaving a frail elder alone.
- Someone is falling often or has problems getting around in their home.
- A plan is needed for an older family who is ill or has a medical diagnosis.
- A spouse is struggling to take care of his or her spouse.
- An older person is in the hospital and will need help at home and transitioning home.
- An adult child lives far away and parent needs assistance.
- An adult child has a parent in another state and needs a recommendation for that area.
- Adult children want parents to stay at home with safety, comfort and independence.
- Older parent may need additional monitoring in a facility.
- Adult children want to know their parents are safe and being cared for so that they can have peace of mind.

Geriatric Care Management continues to be "a valuable" service for those needing help and care coordination for older relatives in our complex health system and world of changing family demands.

For more information or to find a Geriatric Care Manager please see the website at [www.aginglifecare.org](http://www.aginglifecare.org). To speak with someone directly please call Care for Life at 843-852-9090. We will take care of you.