

## Smart Move: Hiring a Nurse Case Manager

**S**ometimes the problems you face are much larger and more complex than you can comfortably manage.

We all understand the benefits of hiring a professional to do certain tasks. Many of us have used a CPA to help with our taxes or an attorney to prepare legal documents. The more complex the nature of the task or situation, the more we find it necessary to seek professional advice and guidance.

The same can be said when it comes to health care and aging issues. The diagnosis, care and treatment of older patients can be quite complicated and different from that of younger people. Aging often entails a substantial increase in doctor visits for the older adult. When you combine this with a growing need for assistance with financial paperwork, as well as routine personal and household activities, “staying on top” of everything can be a daunting task for seniors, their spouses or adult children.

Because their training and knowledge is in the health care field, nurse case managers

can bring order to the chaos. They can function as a key communication link among the primary care physician, the client and their family, and other health care providers and specialists. They often help to “interpret” and simplify complex instructions and regimes from physicians, making them more easily understood by the older adult. The case manager’s ability to review and understand medical billing issues may help to save money for their client. Their knowledge of community resources, which are instrumental in improving the quality of life for seniors, is invaluable.

Utilization of a nurse case manager is becoming more and more commonplace as families deal with busy schedules and long-distance caregiving. Simply put, in view of the increasing complexity of healthcare issues, having a nurse who is available for personal consultation is highly beneficial.

Oftentimes, the smartest decisions you make involve knowing where to turn to get the help you need.



## About IndeQuest

**W**ith corporate offices located in Plymouth, Michigan, IndeQuest is a company that specializes in nurse case management for older adults and their families.

Our pledge is to serve the whole person by striving to meet physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs. We accomplish this through coordinating health care, community, financial and family resources to help seniors navigate the continuum of care.

IndeQuest Nurse Case Managers meet the following standards:

- Nursing degree and licensure as a registered nurse.
- 5 years of clinical experience.
- Expertise in geriatric care, cardiology, oncology, disease management, rehabilitation, trauma and senior community resources.



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## Long-Distance Care

### For many of us,

our path in life has led us far from the place we grew up, away from our parents. The years roll by. One day, we suddenly realize that our parents are in critical need of our help and time, especially if one or both of them are ill. How do we help them when distance is such a troubling obstacle?

Unfortunately, we are not alone. According to a 2004 study by MetLife, there are some 34 million Americans involved in caring for a family member. Fifteen percent of these caregivers, in excess of 4 million, live more than an hour away from their loved ones. To make this situation more challenging, 11 to 16 million of these caregivers have regular jobs, either full or part time.

Even more striking is the time and financial commitment

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## Know the ABC's of Medicare

Understanding what Medicare will – and will not – pay for can be a tricky business. Many people are surprised to discover that neither Medicare nor their health insurance will pick up the tab for services and items needed in the home that are routinely covered in the hospital.

Enrolling in Medicare, determining what coverage is right for you and submitting your Medicare claims can all be intimidating chores. To make it even more confusing, Medicare has four separate sections: Parts A, B, C and D.

- Part A helps cover medically necessary hospital, skilled nursing facility and hospice care when certain guidelines are met. Generally, home health care is not a covered benefit.
- Part B covers almost all reasonable and necessary medical services, including doctors' services, laboratory and x-ray services, durable medical equipment (i.e., wheelchairs and hospital beds), ambulance services, outpatient hospital care and medical supplies.
- Part C allows people to receive their Medicare-covered services from Medicare-approved private health plans, such as HMOs and PPOs.
- Medicare Part D is the new outpatient prescription drug benefit, which is only available through Medicare private drug plans or Medicare private health plans.

Navigating the Medicare maze and optimizing the benefit is just one of the areas in which a nurse case manager can assist clients.

## Caring from a Distance

made by long-distance caregivers. A third of those who participated in the MetLife study reported spending the equivalent of one full work day a week managing services.

Long-distance caregivers spend an average of \$392 per month on travel and other out-of-pocket expenses.

If you find yourself juggling your career, long-distance caregiving and your own

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family obligations, don't be afraid to seek professional advice. Many health care and aging experts strongly recommend engaging a nurse case manager. These health professionals can deal with many of the aspects of health care and living assistance for your family member, keeping you informed every step of the way. More importantly, they allow you the freedom to spend time visiting and sharing precious moments with your loved one.

## More than Medical Care

**G**eorge has lived in the metro area all of his life. A confirmed bachelor, he is an independent soul. Unfortunately, as he aged, George developed memory problems. His nearest relative and the most supportive person in his life, his sister Anna, moved to Denver to be closer to her grandchildren.

When George's memory and health began to fail, Anna, in her late seventies and not in good health herself, was at a loss. George would not leave the area where he had spent his life, and she could not come to be with him. She was appointed his guardian, and with the help of his Trust Officer, she connected with IndeQuest Nurse Case Management.

George's nurse case manager acts as Anna's eyes and ears, and as George's advocate. She sets up and attends George's medical and dental appointments and implements the doctors' recommendations. She arranges and monitors his home health care services. She visits him weekly and, during those friendly visits, observes his physical condition and clarity of thinking. She takes him out to lunch on occasion, and has even helped order his clothing.

The IndeQuest nurse case manager has become a constant in George's life. Even though there are many things he can't



recall, he remembers her. When it's time for her to leave after a visit, he always asks, "What's your hurry?" and when she calls to tell him that she is coming over, he says, "You're welcome any time." It's more than a medical visit; it's a friendship, too.

The nurse case manager calls Anna weekly to let her know how her brother is doing, as well as when anything out of the ordinary happens. Anna declares, "I'm so glad we found you."

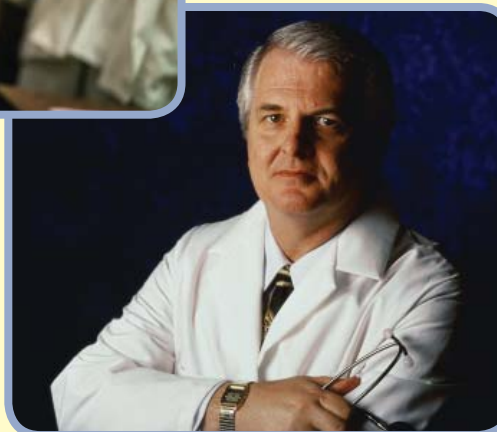
## I Don't Understand What the Doctor Just Told Me!

Going to your physician or the hospital can be a lot like visiting a foreign land. Almost everyone there seems to speak a different language! Unfortunately, many health care professionals are in the habit of using acronyms or terms that have little or no meaning to the average individual. Patients themselves may have difficulty in sharing their concerns or identifying the things that are important for physicians to know. Adding to the confusion is the fact that older adults with multiple health issues will most likely be seeing their primary care physician as well as several specialists, all of whom could be inquiring about test results conducted by other parties.



Having a nurse case manager in attendance at doctors' appointments is the answer to the communication problem. "I really like to go on appointments with my clients - especially those who have a lot of health issues," states

Lori Schmidt, Director of IndeQuest Nurse Case Management. "What I learn from the physician and pass on to my client can make a big difference in the effectiveness of treatment for that individual."



## Making Sense of all Those Medicines

On the average, adults over the age of 65 are taking four to five prescription drugs and two over-the-counter drugs at any given time.<sup>1</sup> Of that group, many also see several different physicians, all of whom may be prescribing medications but unaware of other medicines their patient is taking. This can set the scene for dangerous drug interactions or side effects.

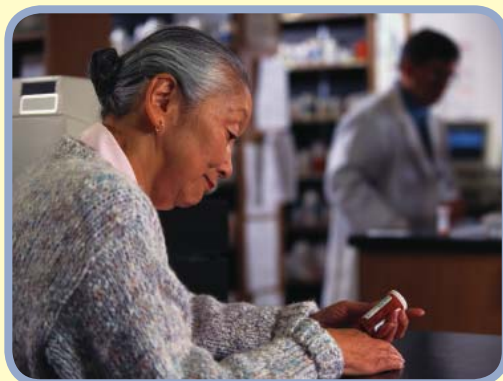
"Taking stock of all the medications, including prescriptions, over the counter drugs, vitamins, supplements and natural remedies, and noting the dosage and frequency is one of the

reviewed and assessed for potential side effects or interactions. If there is cause for concern, the primary care doctor and other involved physicians are consulted and made aware of all medication usage.



Nurse case managers also aid their clients by simplifying the medication schedule and helping them to remain in compliance to their regimes. They utilize a variety of methods, including pill boxes or dispensers, and external cues, when appropriate.

1 Wooten, James, PharmD and Garavis, Julie, RN, BSN (2005). *Polypharmacy: Keeping the Elderly Adult Safe*. Retrieved February 27, 2007 from <http://rnweb.com/rnweb/article/articleDetail.jsp?id=172920>.



first things we do for our clients as IndeQuest nurse case managers," states Joan Garbarino. Once that information is compiled, it is