

ELDER CARE UPDATES



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www.rochestereldercare.com

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Planning for Rehabilitation Needs

by Karen Witkovicz

Rehabilitation (rehab) is often the "middle piece" of the care plan, with a patient going from the acute care facility to the rehab to residence whether that is home, a residential community or nursing home. This is usually arranged by the discharge planner who is often a nurse or social worker. Bed availability and pressure to discharge the person from the hospital often stresses families who are unfamiliar with rehab units and the services they offer.

Does the patient or family have a say in the matter? Can they request a specific facility for their aging relative or friend? What should they ask about each program?

The patient and the family are the ultimate decision makers here. Caregivers should request information on what their family member needs to assure maximum recovery. Insist on discussing these needs clearly and accurately with your doctor and the discharge planner. Often discharge planners are extremely busy. Asking to have them paged may help in contacting them. Also keep in close touch with the doctor and request that he call you as the discharge nears. Make sure they know that the caregiver and patient want to be involved in this process. A patient, depending on his



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needs, can go to a facility that offers acute rehabilitation. This offers more intensive physical, occupational and speech therapy. Often a hospital has such a unit and therapy can be provided there. The stay is short-term. Inpatient rehab offers less therapy sessions per day and there is a longer time for recovery. This is offered in rehab facilities, many nursing homes and also in hospitals.

Here are some things caregivers should look for when assessing rehab facilities:

- A **Does** the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities accredit the facility? Facilities must meet specific criteria to be certified.
- A **How many** hours of therapy are scheduled per week and when are they scheduled?
- A **What kinds** of therapy are provided and who is the person that leads the therapy team? What are the therapists' credentials?

*"Excellent care for your loved one
. Peace of mind for you."*

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Elder Care Updates

How much do you know about ...

Advance Directives?

An advance directive is a written document made by a competent patient for the purpose of guiding health care decisions when that patient is no longer competent to make decisions. A **health care proxy** and a **living will** are two advance directives you may have heard of.

Health Care Proxy – This allows you to appoint one or more persons as agents for health care decisions. If you become incompetent, even temporarily, your proxy will make decisions about care, authorize procedures or refuse care based on what he or she knows about your wishes. The more your proxy knows about your wishes, the better this method works. Specific instructions can also be included in the document.

Living Will – This document gives specific instructions allowing or disallowing certain medical procedures. Since it is difficult to anticipate all end-of-life scenarios, a living will may not address the exact situation you need it to.

A person preparing to make an advance directive should consider:

- “What do I want my loved ones to know?”
- “How important are pain relief and comfort?”
- “Are there specific procedures I don’t want?”
- “Who do I want to make decisions if I can’t?”
- “Have my wishes changed since I last spoke to my family about this?”

....go to Karen’s website, www.rochestereldercare.com/ to download instructions for setting up a health care proxy in New York State....

In the next issue: **Power of Attorney & DNR Orders** ..

New Service to Find Discount Drugs Launched

National Council on Aging has started-up an online discount drug locator. This program helps seniors find discount programs on major pharmaceutical products. BenefitsCheckUpRx is a free and confidential screening tool that provides seniors with a comprehensive and personalized listing of the eligibility for over 240 prescription drug savings programs covering nearly 800 medications. This is an expansion to NCOA's BenefitsCheckUp, a website that provides eligibility reports for federal and state benefit programs to older citizens.

On the web, begin at <http://www.benefitscheckup.org/> ..

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- À **Is** the therapy done at the same hours in the day or does it fluctuate? When is the best time to visit? Who should I call with my questions and concerns?
- À **Are there** any other additional services available, such as social worker, dietician, physician's assistants, etc.?

The rehab process is but one step in the journey of planning care for your client, relative or friend. Working closely with your doctor, discharge planner and therapists will help your relative achieve maximum recovery. ..

Resources For Caregivers

....see www.rochestereldercare.com/reading1.htm for information on ordering these and other eldercare titles....

Books:

“Hiring Home Caregivers: The Family Guide to In-Home Eldercare”

By Helen Susikr

This book is a valuable resource for people looking to hire additional help at home for an elderly relative. The book covers determining what your needs are, your budget, what to look for given your particular situation, recruiting, interviewing, contracts, supervision of home care workers, and dealing with related taxes and insurance.

“Creative Caregiving”

By James R. Sherman, Ph.D.

This book will help both caregivers and health professionals think through new ways to relieve the great burdens of caregiving. Provides some simple answers, some clues and some strategies for coping. ..