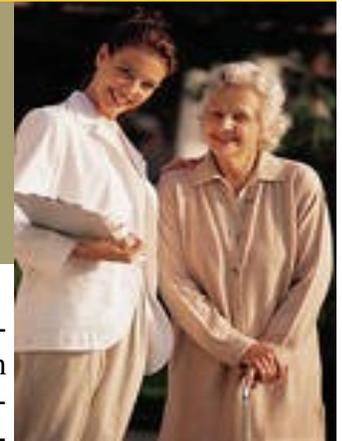


Senior Minutes

In Search of Excellence for Clinical and Management Issues

Moving Mom Into a Nursing Home



Have you ever met a person who **WANTS** to move into a nursing home? Can you imagine a morning when you will wake up and delightfully declare, “I think I’ll move into a long-term care facility!”?

Maybe you’re facing the traumatic task of making this decision for your mom. She has been a guest in your home for nine years, and you have been her caregiver. You looked the other way when she wore a blue sock on her left foot and a green one on the right. But now that she’s warming her socks over the gas burner on the stove, it’s time to make a decision. Safety demands it, hers and yours. It’s time for a move.

You have concerns. It’s an emotional decision. Doubts. Anxiety. Grief. And there are plenty of questions: “Will Mom be treated kindly?” “Will she adjust to her new life?” “Can I trust the nursing home staff to take care of her needs?” Your concerns are normal.

Your mom also has concerns. For her this is the end of the road, the point of no return, the final move before dying. The trumpet has blown: “Life is just about over!” Her panic is provoked primarily by having to “let go” and lose her freedom. She will forfeit her friends, possessions, and memories - but most of all her freedom.

As Americans we pride ourselves on our independence. We fill our formative years with lessons on how to walk by ourselves, feed ourselves, wipe ourselves, and dress ourselves. What teenager doesn’t dream about the day when he can make his own decisions and not depend on Dad or Mom? What college

student doesn’t covet Commencement Day, her own career, and her own apartment where she can be herself?

We invest the first 25% of our lives longing for the day we can make our own Declaration of Independence. Career independence. Decision-making independence. Financial independence.

Then comes the day when Mom will totally lose her independence.

Some of her losses are obvious:

- She won’t be able to visit with family, friends, and neighbors when she wants.
- She won’t have the freedom to cook and eat whatever and whenever she wishes.
- Her personal hygiene will depend on the nurses’ schedules.
- Her personal laundry will be tossed in together with everybody else’s.
- She won’t be free to watch TV whenever she chooses.
- She won’t be able to look at mementos that bring back fond memories of her deceased husband or her children’s childhoods.
- She won’t be able to go to HER church.
- She won’t have the same trusted doctor.
- She won’t be able to talk on the phone whenever she wishes.

Houston Office: 4314 Yoakum Blvd. | Houston, Texas 77006

Dr. Deborah Theis, Regional Manager | Jason Lacy, District Manager | Angela Crump, District Manager
Ph: (713) 850-0049 | Fax: (713) 850-0036 | Toll Free: (800) 806-0465 | Toll Free Fax: (800) 318-0120

Dallas Office: 2300 Valley View Lane, Ste. 330 | Irving, TX 75062

Jim Bolton, Regional Manager | Tammi Dolinger, District Manager
Ph: (972) 812-1091 | Fax: (972) 812-1093

San Antonio Office: 433 Kitty Hawk Bldg. 1, Ste. 212 | Universal City, Texas 78148

Charles Henderson, Regional Manager | William Mejia, District Manager
Ph: (210) 566-9400 | Fax: (210) 566-9401

To view past issues of "Senior Minutes" visit our website:

www.seniorpsychiatry.com

Moving Mom Into A Nursing Home (Cont.)

As gut-wrenching as this move might be for you, the Caregiver, keep in mind that it's even worse for Mom. Be as understanding, compassionate, and loving as you can be. Involve her in as much of the decision-making as possible. She is losing her freedom. But maybe her will to move is being crippled even more by the fear of the unknown.

During the weeks before admission spend some time with Mom in the facility. Talk with the staff and residents, so that Mom can develop some sort of comfort level. Attend activities. Eat meals in the dining room. Go to family informational meetings. Meet with the social worker or the activities director.

When at home, spend some time doing the following:

Make a list of what the nursing home requires from you, and try to see how much can be done before admission.

Involve Mom in making a plan for the move - what will happen, what Mom will take with her, and how she will get settled into her new environment. The more Mom knows, the more comfortable she will feel and the more cooperative she will be.

Make a plan for yourself, the Caregiver. What kind of support will you need during this time and the time immediately following the move? Sometimes a bed in a nursing home becomes available out of the blue, and you have very little time before the move. A definite plan will put you and Mom more at ease.

Educate yourself. Understand your rights in regard to nursing homes and care. Get a reasonable understanding of the costs and payments involved, especially when it comes to the differences between Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance funding.

For yourself, make use of support groups the nursing home may offer. Lean on your friends, your pastor, the social worker, psychologists, and counselors who can help.

Hopefully, for Mom the time of transition will be brief, and she will make new friends, adjust to a new routine, and feel comfortable in her new surroundings. Remember when you were ten years old and your family moved to a new town? It was nasty. But life got better as time marched on.



Ditto for Mom. The transition time will be tough.

Remember, nobody **WANTS** to move into a nursing home, yet hundreds of thousands of people have done it. Some have even flourished in their new environment. Do your best to keep Mom thinking positively about the future, and better days will be down the hallway.

This article is one of a series included in a "Resource Manual for Bereavement in Long-Term Care" created, published, and copyrighted by *Senior PsychCare*. To receive the complete manual, call 713-850-0049, ext. 232.