

# Boomers, Elders, and More E-Newsletter

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<http://vanderbilt.edu/child-family-center/>

## *Message from the Coordinator*

As a family caregiver, you are responsible for taking care of your elderly loved one. This includes providing assistance with activities of daily living like eating, bathing, toileting, dressing, and other household chores.

Family caregivers should be sure to have in place legal documents important to the lifelong care of their care receiver. Having access to important legal documents will help make caregiving easier for family caregivers.

The most common legal documents that every caregiver should have are: living will, durable power of attorney for health care, durable power of attorney, last will and testament.

If you have specific questions about estate planning, stop by Light Hall Room 411 on May 19 between 11:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. Attorneys will be on hand to answer questions about advance directive, conservatorship, last will and testament, living will, power of attorney, probate and trust.

Consultations will last approximately 15 minutes and will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis. Plan to arrive no later than 1:30 p.m. to request an appointment. Several attorneys will be available, but you may have to wait based on demand.

Most people don't like to think about a future they don't share with their loved ones, so getting your affairs in order today can make your loved ones passing less stressful for those left behind.

# News Highlight

## For older adults with dementia, transitions in care can increase risk for serious problems

Original article from *Diagnosis and Disruption: Population-level analysis identifying points of care at which transitions are highest for people with dementia and factors that contribute to them*

*Saskia N. Sivananthan PhD and Kimberlyn M. McGrail PhD*

A transition is a physical move from one location to another with a stay of at least one night. For older adults, especially those with dementia, some transitions may be unavoidable and necessary. However, unnecessary transitions are linked to problems such as medication errors, hospital readmissions, and increased risk of death. What's more, good dementia care emphasizes the need for familiar people and familiar environments, and this can be more difficult to support when too many transitions take place. Having coordinated care and a long-term care plan in place that considers the needs of a person with dementia may reduce unnecessary transitions, say the authors of a study published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

In their study, researchers from the UBC Centre for Health Services and Policy Research in Vancouver, British Columbia, followed 6,876 people aged 65 and older who were diagnosed with dementia between 2001 and 2002. The researchers analyzed healthcare data from 2000 until the study ended in 2011. Besides dementia, 23 percent of the group had no other chronic diseases at the beginning of the study, while 44 percent of the group had two or more chronic diseases.

The researchers found a spike in the number of transitions during the first year of dementia diagnosis. Sixty-five percent of the study participants experienced at least one transition during the year of their diagnosis; 17 percent experienced three or more transitions, most of which were hospitalizations. More than 60 percent of people were hospitalized in the year of their diagnosis, and these hospital stays generally lasted for a month or longer.

In addition to data regarding the year of diagnosis, the researchers also uncovered that people experienced a higher number of transitions the year prior to and the year of their death. Receiving a prescription for an antipsychotic medication or benzodiazepine, as well as living in more rural areas, were linked to a higher number of transitions, too.

The researchers learned that receiving ongoing care from a known primary care physician and receiving care consistent with dementia guidelines were linked to fewer transitions. Depending on each person's needs, guideline recommendations include:

- Receiving recommended lab tests
- Seeing a dementia specialist
- Having a physical exam
- Participating in counseling

The researchers concluded that, for people with dementia and their caregivers, the year of diagnosis is often overwhelmingly stressful. Still, steps can be taken to lessen transitions and improve care. These include:

- Connection to an ongoing primary care provider
- Early, advanced care planning consistent with one's wishes
- Having a patient advocate who can help with care coordination
- Increasing caregiver and provider awareness of community support systems



# Convincing Your Aging Parents to Get In Home Care

Clare Absher RN, BSN (writer for CarePathways)

Hiring in home care is frequently NOT a choice that our aging parents are agreeable to, despite their desire to remain at home. Mom or Dad often express that outside help is not welcome as they are quite capable of managing on their own. Hiring a caregiver is seen by many old folks as a threat to their independence and an invasion of privacy. Apprehension and distrust of in-home caregivers are also common reasons for refusing home care. As a former home health nurse, I have helped numerous families problem-solve for resistant aging parents. My experiences have left me with some suggestions that you may find worth trying.



## 1. **Ally with the more independent parent.**

When your parents are both living and reside in their own home together, direct your attention to the less needy one. For instance, suggest that their spouse would be the one to benefit from outside assistance even when they both might. By allying yourself with the more independent parent, you may ultimately be able to get them both to accept the help they require.

## 2. **Get the caregiver in the door.**

Another approach might be to suggest hiring a caregiver to manage some household chores and NOT actual hands-on care or personal assistance. Often this is seen as less threatening to a loved one's independence and will serve as a means to "get the caregiver in the door." Emphasize getting help handling the heavy housework such as vacuuming and laundry. Suggest help with food, shopping, and traveling to appointments particularly when driving is no longer an option. In this manner, your parents may accept help they would not have otherwise been agreeable to. Your hope is that they will see the value in having additional assistance by developing a trusting relationship with their caregiver.

## 3. **Recall the famous line "It's not you, it's me."**

If your parent is living alone or with you, redirect the attention on YOU as the caregiver needing the home care assistance for peace of mind. Emphasize that you would be the one to benefit a lot from such help as many parents place concern for their children's welfare before their own. Suggest that bringing in a housekeeper for instance, would alleviate your worry about managing daily household chores such as cleaning, shopping, meals, and laundry. Or should a nurse aid come in to assist your loved one with bathing and personal care, you would have more time to manage other household responsibilities. As a working caregiver, suggest that by having a companion or assistant stay with your loved one, it would relieve you of worries and concerns while away.

## 4. **Call upon a trusted professional.**

Another idea might be to seek the help and advice of a trusted professional who is someone your parents hold in high regard. They might surprise you by their willingness to accept the advice of a long time family physician, a former or current home health nurse, or a family friend in the medical field, prior to your own input. Employ their trusted status as a means to relay your concerns and advise your parents in the right direction.

## 5. **Don't take their resistance personally.**

In many families, your conflicting role as the child and caregiver hinder your well-meaning attempts at helping your parents. The basis for your actions should not be confused by misguided guilt. Therefore, do not take their rebuttals personally or offensively, but rather focus on a necessary means to an end.

# **Tribute to Caregivers Everywhere**

## **You are Not Alone**

By Mona Newsome Wicks PhD, RN, FAAN

You offer kind words. You lift and you tug.  
You bathe and you dress. You comfort and you hug.  
You drive and you shop.  
You cook, nurse, and you clean.  
You often, defer your personal dreams.  
You are not alone.

You sometimes worry.  
You work first at home, and then at your job all day.  
You sleep very little, but you sleep when you can.  
Sometimes you have more work, then you can possibly stand.  
Yet, you remain steadfast and hopeful.  
You are not alone.

This month we honor you, we acknowledge your care.  
We acknowledge the love, that you unselfishly share.  
Out of concern, we make these requests,  
We ask that, when you are tired that you please rest.  
We ask you to walk, we ask you to sleep.  
We ask that you healthily and regularly eat.  
We ask that you see your health care provider.  
That you share your concerns as it is much healthier, than isolation and proud silence.  
You are not alone.

We remind you to ask for help and to weep, for tears can offer a much-needed release.  
We hope for you, joy and a well-deserved peace.  
Caring for others, without caring for self, can undermine physical and emotional health.  
You are not alone.

Your efforts are an important and an unselfish contribution.  
This work greatly contributes to sustaining our nation.  
We salute you and thank you for all that you do.  
Most of all we wish happiness and good health to you.  
You are not alone.

Source: caregiver.com (Issue #895)

### Upcoming Events

Vanderbilt Family Resource Center's Caregiver Support group will be held on Wednesday, June 8, 2016 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. in Medical Center East Room 8380A. The caregiver support group is a time to share information and openly discuss your problems without judgment, to process your feelings, and to hear others talk about their experiences.

**If you need information or resources to assist you in your caregiving role, contact Stacey Bonner, Family Services Coordinator, at [stacey.l.bonner@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:stacey.l.bonner@vanderbilt.edu) or 936-1990.**