

Boomers, Elders, and More E-Newsletter

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

Message from the Coordinator

The month of November has been set aside nationally to thank, support, educate, empower and celebrate family caregivers.

As a family caregiver, you have been put in an unexpected role where you are the caregiver for a loved one. Some family caregivers were pulled towards caregiving out of love. Sometimes it is the increasing needs of an aging parent that transforms daughter/son into the role of a caregiver. At times a family member becomes the primary caregiver by default, because they are single or have the knowledge of benefits or resources in the area. The role can be challenging, full of unknowns and missteps, but it can also be fulfilling and life changing.

Family caregiving is frequently unpredictable. It is often sporadic, varying from week to week, month to month. Sometimes, it requires little or no face-to-face interaction between the family caregiver and loved one, and other times nearly around-the-clock presence is required. Increasingly, caregiving is being provided from a distance. This intensifies the importance of timely and accessible communication processes between the family, medical professionals, and caregiving team.

Family caregivers are the silent heroes of our society whose contributions often go unrecognized. Family caregivers give of themselves to make better the lives of a loved one.

If you are a family caregiver, thank you for what you do. Celebrate yourself this month by doing something that will make your job as a caregiver a little easier.

Division of Administration

Child & Family Center



News Highlight

1 in 4 Seniors Doesn't Discuss End-of-Life Care

Finding suggests efforts to encourage more planning aren't working, researcher says

By Robert Preidt



More than one-quarter of American seniors have never discussed end-of-life care, a new study finds.

“Despite decades of work to improve advance care planning, over a quarter of older adults have still not engaged in any type of discussion or planning for their end-of-life preferences or plans.” said lead author Krista Harrison, a geriatrics research fellow at the University of California, San Francisco.

The researchers looked at more than 2,100 Medicare beneficiaries aged 65 and older. Data from the group included self-reported age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, income, self-rated health, number of chronic conditions, disability in activities of daily living, and dementia.

The researchers found that 60 percent of the beneficiaries said they'd had discussions on end-of-life care, 50 percent on power of attorney, and 52 percent on other advanced directives.

Thirty-eight percent reported discussions on all three elements of advanced care planning, while 27 percent said they hadn't discussed any of the elements.

The rate of discussions on each element varied by as much as 35 percent, depending on patient characteristics. For two or more elements, the rate was lower among those aged 65 to 74, blacks and Hispanics, and those with less education and lower income.

The lowest rate of end-of-life planning was among older Spanish-speaking Hispanics, with 19 percent reporting end-of-life discussion, 20 percent discussing power of attorney and 17 percent discussing advanced directives.

The study also found that older adults with dementia had much lower rates of end-of-life discussions (54 percent) and advance directives (46 percent) than those without dementia (62 percent and 54 percent, respectively).

“Our findings suggest that there are substantial portions of the population of community-dwelling older adults who need to begin discussions about their plans and preferences before they are unable to share those preferences with their loved ones,” Harrison said in a university news release.

Source: https://medlineplus.gov/news/fullstory_161777.html

Tips for Difficult Family Conversations

By Amy Goyer (AARP writer)

It's that time of year when many families gather for holiday celebrations and check in on loved ones. It can be a tough combo, creating a celebratory mood while also dealing with serious family issues. Here are tips for setting up a successful conversation.

Observe before you act. Before you even begin a conversation, spend time with loved ones observing and gathering accurate, specific information about your concerns. If you want to talk about driving, ride along first to make sure your concerns are valid. It helps if you can spend a few days with them and actually stay at their home. Is the mail piling up? Are they having trouble navigating stairs? Are they able to prepare healthy meals? Try to be objective, talking with other family members and key people who see them regularly. Then do your homework: research options for support and care for them. Never bring a change unless you have realistic alternatives to offer. For example, if your loved ones stop driving, how will they get to the store, appointments, etc.? (Note that it helps if you can talk about a problem *before* it's a major issue. It's always easier to discuss how you might handle a situation when it's still hypothetical.)

Approach with love, concern and support. Make sure your mind and expectations are in the right place to set the tone. Starting out with a confrontational, negative attitude will sabotage the discussion. Don't make it a power play. Remember that your role is *always* to support your loved ones and help them be as independent as possible, for as long as possible—not to take over their lives.

Communicate effectively.

Use conversation starters. If you're uncertain about how to bring up the subject, try an indirect approach such as discussing an article or a book you read, a friend's situation or a television show.

Ask them for input. It's not a one-way conversation, so ask how they think they are doing and what adjustments they've thought about. Specific questions can be helpful, such as, "Are you ever worried about taking care of the house and the yard?" "Is there anything you'd like to have more help with?" "Do you have any worries or concerns?" "If/when it's time for you to hang up the keys, have you thought about other changes you'll need to make?"

Use "I" statements. Starting sentences with "You need to" or "You just have to" puts people on the defensive. Instead try "I am concerned about" or "I want to support you with."

Listen, reflect and validate. Listen with an open mind, then rephrase and reflect back what you've heard from loved ones. Have compassion for their situation and understand that change is hard for anyone and that the "unknown" is the biggest fear for all of us—at any age. They may feel scared, angry, confused or hopeless. Try to understand their fears and concerns. Confirm that you understand their views and feelings, and take them into consideration when you talk about options.

Include key people in the conversation. Sometimes the right people at the table can make all the difference. It may be a certain family member they listen to or a respected adviser such as the lawyer, doctor, faith community leader or friend. You might even consider an objective third party, like a care manager, counselor or mediator, to help facilitate the conversation.

source: <http://blog.aarp.org/2015/12/17/amy-goyer-talking-about-family-caregiving-with-loved-ones/>



The Five Most Common Medicare Scams

1. **Switching plans is a must. No!** Experts suggest that checking out your options each year is the best way to make sure you have the best plan for you. You are allowed to stay with your current plan and opt to make no changes.
2. **Medicare is changing cards. No!** If you are approached by someone who says you need to update your information to receive your new card, you are dealing with a scam. Remember, Medicare will NEVER call or email you requesting personal information.
3. **For you, a special price. No!** Con artists like to use time-sensitive sale pitches to scam seniors into acting quickly and not thinking about the deal. If it sounds too good to be true, it is. To shop or enroll in legitimate Medicare plans use the plan finder at www.medicare.gov or call 800-MEDICARE.
4. **Health fair scams. No!** Another play scammers use is to offer a free gift. All you need to do is sign up with your name and Medicare number. Remember, NEVER give out your Medicare number.
5. **Phony organizations. No!** Be alert when you receive calls from people that say they are from your doctor's office or local health agencies. In some instances, scammers will illegally gain access to your medical information. Then, they call you with just enough details to ease your mind that they are authentic and cause you to reveal even more details, which then leads to fraud.

To report Medicare scams call 1-800-Medicare or the Office of the Inspector General at 1-800-447-8477.

For free and objective Medicare assistance in Tennessee call SHIP (TN State Health Insurance Assistance Program) at 1-877-801-0044.

Upcoming Events

When preparing to take flight, the flight attendant gives instructions to follow in an event of an emergency, one being "put your oxygen mask on before assisting others." When taking on the role of being a caregiver, that form of instruction is needed. Often caregivers are so busy taking care of the needs of their loved ones that they neglect their own needs. Over time this can hinder their ability to effectively provide care and cause burnout. In this session, Tabitha Satterfield, Aging Program Director with the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability will provide you with some basic tools that can help caregivers to learn to care for themselves so they can effectively provide care for their loved ones. This month's Boomers, Elders, and More Luncheon session will be held on Wednesday, November 16, 2016 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. in Light Hall Room 412. Please feel free to bring your lunch.



Family members who do not live nearby often come home to find that things are not the same as they used to be with their elderly loved one. Sometimes families have a difficult time assessing the situation objectively; the stress of the situation can lead to tense conversations and hurt feelings. Amy Walter, Licensed Master Social Worker with Senior Helpers, will provide resources that can help families assess their loved one's self-sufficiency to remain the home. This month's Boomers, Elders, and More Luncheon session will be held on Wednesday, December 7, 2016 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. in Light Hall Room 412. Please feel free to bring your lunch.

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 or 936-1990.