

Untie the Elderly[®]

a program to eliminate physical and chemical restraints in health care settings

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Special Edition

Saluting Caregivers



This Spring 2001 issue is dedicated to caregivers and in particular to those who make the biggest difference in the lives of residents every day. We may call them by different names depending upon the facility, or our geographical area. Indeed, a variety of titles are used in the articles in this issue as each writer refers to these men and women. Regardless, we are celebrating all of the Certified Nursing

Assistants (CNAs), the nurses' aides, and the resident assistants who care beyond compare.

The contributors to this issue have words of encouragement and appreciation that need to be shared. Take this issue and post it, pass it around, leave it on the lunch table, place in a big red envelope marked "IMPORTANT" and give it to every resident assistant in your facility—whatever will work! Every CNA deserves to hear each day that they are valued and respected. They need to hear this not only in words, but also in how they are included in decision making, care planning and training opportunities.

Over the past fifteen years the resident assistants have taught me about care giving and about compassion. They have shared their humor, their talents, their disappointments and their coffee with me. My debt to them is great and it is one reason that it is with gratitude and deep affection that this edition is dedicated to acknowledging their service.

Lisa Lynch Sweeney, *Editor*

Let us hear about your challenges and successes; we invite you to submit an article for publication to **Untie the Elderly**, P. O. Box 100, Kennett Square, PA 19348; deadline for next issue is April 30, 2001.

Visit our Web site at:
www.ute.kendal.org



from The American Nurses Association...

Reason to Rejoice

As we enter 2001, there is reason to rejoice! Heightened media attention to the tragedies associated with use of restraints has resulted in a number of changes in health care. The use of restraints or seclusion to manage behavior is considered an emergency measure, according to the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), that should be reserved for those occasions when unanticipated, severely aggressive or destructive behavior places the patient or others in imminent danger. While different factors may precipitate this type of psychiatric, behavioral, and physical outburst for an individual patient, the need for rapid assessment and continuous monitoring is applicable in each case. The behavior management standard governs the use of a restraint or seclusion in this type of a crisis situation whether it occurs on acute medical and surgical units, psychiatric units, Alzheimer's units, or in general, psychiatric, alcohol-drug, children's, rehabilitation, short-term, or long-term care hospitals, and which, regardless of their accreditation status, Medicare or Medicaid-participating hospitals must meet.

Increasingly, caregivers, be they physicians, licensed independent practitioners, registered nurses, LP/VNs or CNAs (who offer the majority of direct care services to the elderly), are altering their practices to see to it that care is provided to the elderly in the least restrictive setting possible, allowing for freedom of movement while at the same time ensuring the senior's safety. A recent Institute of Medicine (IOM) report: *Improving the Quality of Long-Term Care*, noted that many facilities have successfully reduced

the inappropriate use of physical and chemical restraints (Wunderlich and Kohler/2000).

Long-term care services are labor intensive, so the quality of care depends largely on the performance of the caregiving personnel (Wunderlich and Kohler/2000). It is critical that efforts be directed toward retaining (and recruiting) caregivers who are sensitive to the needs (and desires) of the elderly. Only when such staff are in place can the needs of the elderly be fully met. Without the thousands of devoted caregivers who provide care day in and day out in nursing facilities throughout the land, the quality of life of millions of residents would be diminished. These caregivers. . .CNAs, nurses, physicians and other support staff. . .are to be commended for their devotion.

And, at long last, the value of appropriate staffing in long term care has been recognized by the federal government and Medicare funding for skilled nursing facilities has been increased by \$1.6 billion, including a 16.7 percent increase in payments for nursing services. This should enable facilities to increase the number of caregivers present to meet their residents' needs. Indeed, there ***IS*** reason to rejoice!

REFERENCE: Wunderlich, G.S. and Kohler, P., Editors; Committee on Improving Quality in Long-Term Care, Division of Health Care Services, Institute of Medicine. (2000). *Improving the Quality of Long-Term Care*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 65.

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from a Certified Nursing Assistant...

Being old in America is not much to look forward to. While we all are afraid of death and don't want to die young, we also (strangely enough) are afraid of getting old.

Remember the beauty cream commercial? The actress, who looks about seventeen, is worried about wrinkles and says she is "going to fight aging every step of the way!"

Maybe she should kill herself and declare victory?

Let's not forget all the family members who don't come to visit your patients because they are so uncomfortable with seeing a loved one grow old.

Is it any surprise, then, that you, who have chosen to care for our old treasures, are as devalued as the elderly themselves?

People ask you, "How can you work there? Isn't it depressing? It smells so bad, and people are dying. You must be a special kind of person."

In a way these strangers are right. You are special because you have discovered an ancient truth: love comes in all sizes, shapes, ages and smells. And you get and give some every day.

TODAY: Looking in the mirror, say "I am special!"

Caregivers like you almost seem to have the desire to give in their blood.

You usually were the helper at home, taking care of the little kids or helping with Gramma. Growing up, you baby-sat.

Working in a day care, school, group home or other care-setting wouldn't scare you. Your life is about caring for others. How many years have you been a paid caregiver?

Through this caring, you derive great personal satisfaction. Like the old Raggedy Anne doll that says "I love you" on her chest, your heart reads, "I care."

While others jump from job to job, quitting because they hate the work, the boss, and the pay, you have found your place.

You have come to see rewards for taking care of others. You know that in bringing comfort you find comfort, that in loving you are loved.

TODAY: Be satisfied with you.

Follow-up to last issue: Readers wanting to access the *Strategies Checklist for People Concerned About Someone Who Is Being Restrained*, the correct web site is...www2.apex.net/users/leehaven/chklst.html.

Coming: Next issue will focus on restraint elimination in acute care settings.

from a Certified Nursing Assistant (continued)

Editor's Note: The following are excerpts from [For Goodness' Sake: A Daily Book of Cheer for CNAs and Others Who Care](#), reproduced with permission of Hartman Publishing, Inc. To order your copy, call 1-800-999-9534.

Popular television shows go in cycles. In the early 1960s, westerns were the craze. Then came the spy shows, where handsome men and women lived lives of intrigue. Remember *The Man From Uncle*? Doctor shows, variety shows, lawyer shows. Trends come and go.

In the 1990s, real life dramas of dangerous rescues caught the American public's fancy. Film crews would recapture some horrifying near-tragedy through a reenacted skit, and we would sit spell-bound before our televisions.

Cynics would say such a fascination with often bloody, life-threatening events indicates our culture had hit a new low. Theories could be asserted that the average citizen was turned on by pain and suffering, gore and guts.

But what really draws us to these programs is the sheer raw facts—strangers risking their lives to rescue strangers who are at risk of losing their lives. People helping people in the most realistic circumstances.

These daily heroics are the stuff nurses' aides are made of. Minute by minute, 24 hours a day, care is lovingly given to strangers, often very fragile strangers.

TODAY: Celebrate your courage.

Jan Haggerlin was an amazing staff person. Now living in Florida, Jan served for some time as activities director at Maple Lane Nursing Home.

A fairly new resident had been admitted to the facility, blind and in restraints. The hospital had apparently restrained her—a practice we have found quite common. It seems that hospitals often transfer such patients to nursing homes in restraints. When there are no documents which state the contrary, many facilities keep the restraints on, assuming that they are a long standing treatment.

Working with the rest of the staff, Jan was convinced that the belt restraint was unnecessary. Blind, this lady wasn't about to walk anywhere without some help.

With the restraint off, the patient got stronger and was able to walk with assistance. This terrific progress led Jan to ask the next logical question: "Why can't Mrs. Benson see?"

A trip to the eye doctor revealed the need for cataract surgery. The surgery was scheduled and successfully completed within a few weeks. As Mrs. Benson's bandages were removed, Jan quickly grabbed a colorful video cover and held it up. "Can you see this picture?" she asked.

"It looks like a bird," Mrs. Benson said.

Even a bird watcher couldn't have been as excited as Jan Haggerlin with Mrs. Benson's description of the Woody Woodpecker cartoon. She could see!

TODAY: Believe in the impossible.



from an Instructor...

Equipping CNAs for Success

The quality of life for a resident is impacted, either positively or negatively, by the quality of care provided by the staff, especially by the nurses' aide who is expected to be highly skilled at providing psychosocial as well as physical care. The nurses' aide plays a key role in promoting a resident's sense of wellness and emotional security. Handling difficult behaviors such as combativeness and agitation are part of the daily routine in a long term care facility. However common, these problem behaviors are a source of great concern to nurses' aides as they strive to provide the best possible care.

Some of the factors that can improve the delivery of care by an aide include: staffing with permanent nursing assignments, training nurses' aides in recreational activity approaches, involving aides in the care planning process, and providing supportive supervisory staff.

Permanent nursing assignments, where the a nurses' aide provides care for the same group of residents, is of great benefit to both the resident and the nurses' aide. Residents benefit from having the same caregiver daily since they need to explain care requests to fewer personnel, and having a familiar staff face they can trust. Permanent assignments afford the nurses' aide a better understanding of changes in resident behavior that often signal a resident's unmet emotional need.

Nurses' aides who receive training in recreation therapies, and who are encouraged to participate in resident activities, have a wonderful opportunity to

establish a special connection with residents. Also, the aide can use recreation to redirect problem behaviors.

It is very important that the nurses' aides be included in the care planning process. They must have a respected voice if their participation in a behavioral approach to care is to be successful.

One of the most common areas of dissatisfaction reported by all nurses' aides is the lack of supervisory staff's willingness to listen to their suggestions. Supervisors must listen and be willing to provide feedback to nurses' aides' comments and concerns. Additionally, supervisors can act as teachers in human behavior. Stressing that a resident's behavior is a form of communication and not merely a negative part of the aide's work day, encourages the nurses' aide to shift her focus from a problem orientation to a better understanding of a resident's behavior. When nurses' aides are given the support and the tools to effectively manage difficult resident situations, everyone wins!

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REMINDER: The brochure *A Guide To Bed Safety - Bed Rails in Hospitals, Nursing Homes and Home Health Care: The Facts*, is available free of charge. To obtain a copy, contact Mary Scharf at 610-388-5580; or Email to—mscharf@kcorp.kendal.org.



from a family...

EDITOR'S NOTE: As care givers, there are moments that jolt us back to focus and help us to remember why it is that we feel so strongly about the careers we have chosen. Early in December, as I was leaving for the weekend, I spotted a letter on the bulletin board by the nurses' station. It was written by the daughter of a resident who had a very long and difficult decline both physically and cognitively. This resident had traveled from a leadership status in the community down a tangled and vicious path of Alzheimer's dementia.

This letter, a gift, confirmed that the staff had succeeded in their mission to respect and honor the resident until her death and that their work was recognized and appreciated. It also reminds us that our care giving goes far beyond the walls of the buildings we work within.

Dear Members of the Staff,

My brothers and I want to thank you so much for the wonderful care you gave our mother. It was so evident that you really cared for her, in every sense of the word. And you cared for us when we came to visit. While Mom could communicate she always said, "Everyone here is so good to me." As a physician, I have seen many of the downsides of modern health care. The friendliness, efficiency and courtesy of everyone I encountered at (name of health care facility) was at such a high level, it reminded me what really outstanding care can be. It was very emotionally difficult for us to visit Mom during this past year, and we felt that you understood this. No one ever added to our guilt by look or word. It eased our minds immensely to know that she was in such good hands.

Mom's memorial service will be at (name of place). We would like to invite any of you who can attend, for it will give you more of a glimpse of Mom at her prime. I am also enclosing a picture of our family, taken by my brother's wife (so she is not in it) this Thanksgiving. All these people, big and small, had their lives enhanced by the care you gave Mom in her last years. God bless you.

Love,

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