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In Home Senior Care Agencies Offer Essential Benefits to Healthcare Professionals

Professional in home senior care agencies play a significant role in creating a bridge between seniors, their loved ones, and healthcare professionals such as: physicians, nurses, discharge planners, and therapists. When a senior under the care of a doctor has a dedicated professional caregiver, employed by a qualified in-home care agency, the patient has extra support and someone additional with whom the healthcare professional can interface regarding current and follow up care for the senior patient.

The unfortunate truth is that physicians have limited time allotted to spend with each of their patients. During that time, they are conducting exams, posing questions, giving referrals, discussing



treatment options and offering instructions for post-appointment care, such as medications, physical therapy, diet requirements, and follow up appointments. Even when a senior has been hospitalized, the reality is that these medical facilities are urged to discharge patients as quickly as possible. This can be difficult for a senior to handle on his own, or even with the assistance of a helpful family member or friend.

What are the some of the risks?

- Incomplete comprehension on the part of the senior regarding the treatment plan the doctor has laid out
- Misunderstanding regarding medications and dosages
- No follow-up scheduling of appointments, or missed appointments
- No change in diet/nutrition as required or recommended by the doctor

Sometimes even without an impairment in the ability to comprehend, an individual can get overwhelmed at the doctor's office or while in the hospital. The potential for mistakes on the part of the senior patient increases, which could lead to harmful results.

What happens when a senior fails to follow instructions or misses crucial information?

Sadly, there are several scenarios that may play out:

- The senior misses the next or subsequent appointments with the designated health care professional. This may mean an interruption in important steps in treatment, missing medication, allowing the illness to prolong or worsen, and potentially putting the patient in a life-threatening situation depending on her medical condition.
- The family member in charge of the care of the patient does not receive pertinent information from the clinician.
- The senior simply decides not to follow instructions, putting herself in danger or adding to the health problem.
- The senior gets confused and forgets medication or how to follow the nutrition plan.
- A senior who is unstable is unable to make physical changes in the home to improve safety and mobility and prevent falls.

When any of these situations occur, the health risk to the senior patient is of great concern. He can suffer devastating consequences, and at the very least, the likelihood of re-admittance to the hospital is increased. If a patient is readmitted within a certain period of time, for a similar or related condition, the medical facility faces strict penalties instituted by the ACA (Affordable Care Act), and as a result, suffers financial loss. The facility and healthcare professionals may also incur complaints and grievances against them for any perceived failure in treatment of the senior patient.

These costs and complaints can easily be avoided. When healthcare professionals have a trusted in-home care agency with which they can partner, and refer their senior patients to for care at the time of discharge, they are effectively reducing the odds for patient treatment disruption or hospital re-admittance. With a certified in-home care professional, trained in the specific care of seniors, their age related illnesses and health conditions, the health care professional has someone with whom they can communicate on behalf of the patient, who:

- is prepared to follow discharge orders
- receive and carry out care instructions and take notes when necessary
- report back to responsible family members and healthcare professionals where needed
- give medication reminders
- provide proper nutrition and personal care
- make necessary changes in the home environment to ensure senior safety and professional care
- schedule follow-up appointments
- provide status updates on the patient to the physician/therapists

By working together for the senior patient, the senior's needs are met, the transition from hospital to home is positive, loved ones are relieved of the burden and comforted by the qualified help, and **ultimately**, the health care professionals and medical facilities are able to provide better care to their patients, thereby reducing readmission rates and penalties.

Please contact us if you have any questions: (707) 763-6600.