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Maybe you need a geriatric care manager

Are you a senior, or do you know a senior, who is feeling bullied by our managed care health care system? Are you or someone you know, faced with a myriad of decisions regarding your health care? Feel you don't have the information to make these decisions? Are you a senior who is alone with no one locally who can help you with your health care decisions? Is your senior loved one out of state and needing help with their care? Are you a senior, or do you know a senior, who needs help with coordinating and managing life, living and health care resources and options?

Perhaps a professional geriatric care manager (GCM) could help you

In Part 1 of this two-part series we will look at some of the situations that indicate a GCM would be useful. In Part 2 we will look at the range of services a GCM can provide

Geriatric care managers provide a variety of very valuable services to senior citizens and the people who care for them. If you are a senior citizen or are someone who provides care for a senior citizen, you should be aware of GCMs and the services they provide.

Generally speaking a GCM is a specialist who assists older



Senior Cares
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adults and their caregivers with the changing and complex needs associated with aging. These are professionals who specialize in assisting older people and their families in sorting out their long-term care arrangements and have training in gerontology, social work, nursing or counseling

GCMs are usually called upon by the family of an elderly person to conduct a care planning assessment in order to identify the medical, physical, functional and social/emotional needs of the senior and to offer an individualized plan of recommendations. They are then available to implement the plan.

According to Susan Lewin, LICSW, CMC, President of the New England Chapter of Professional Geriatric Care Managers one or more of the following situations could indicate that a GCM might be helpful:

- When an elder needs advocacy in dealing with an overwhelming healthcare system
- When family or elders have limited time, resources

and expertise or live at a distance

- When there are repeated hospital or emergency room visits

- When family dynamics require objective consultation, and third party involvement

- When the family or caregiver is exhausted and needs support and guidance

- When end-of-life issues require sensitive coordination of all servicing entities

- When responsibilities for coordination of care fall on other professionals, such as doctors, nurses, financial advisors, or attorneys that goes beyond the scope of their services and expertise

- When a change of living situation is necessary and an objective evaluation with recommendations is needed

- When conditions in the home are deteriorating such as insufficient food, missing doctor appointments, filth in home and on the elder, home repairs not being done, mail and bills piling up

- When there are multiple diagnoses/difficult situations, complicated decision-making and care coordination

- When an elder or involved family member needs a 'road map' after new diagnosis or hospitalization

- When there is limited or no social support

- When there is need for support and resources to maintain independence

- When there is disagreement among family members about next steps

- When existing caregivers need supervision and on-going training

- When elders of family are struggling with balancing safety and independence

- When there is a need for consistent, unbiased, accurate communications

If any of the above describes your particular situation, perhaps a GCM could help you. Contact the N.E. Chapter of Geriatric Care Managers (617-426-3533 or www.gcmnewengland.org) for the names of a few GCMs in your area with whom to discuss your particular needs. You should interview a few before deciding on one with whom to work. For a national directory, go to www.caremanager.org to find a GCM in most all 50 states

Jack Cross is president of Home Instead Senior Care a provider of companionship and home care for the elderly. He can be reached at 781-402-0060 or www.homeinstead.com.

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How a geriatric care manager can help you

Overwhelmed by decisions you have to make regarding your health care? Are you a primary caregiver for someone but feeling the responsibility is getting too much for you? Trying to take care of a loved one and direct their care but feeling you do not have the necessary knowledge and experience? Is your senior loved one out of state and needing help with their care? Confused by Medicare and Medicaid? Trying to help a loved one decide if it is necessary to move to a senior care facility, and which one? Need an assertive professional to represent your interests when dealing with health care providers? If you answered yes to any of these questions, perhaps you need the services of a professional Geriatric Care Manager (GCM).

In Part I of this two-part series, we looked at the kinds of situations where a GCM could be helpful. In this part, we will look at what, specifically, a GCM can actually do for you

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them. If you are a senior citizen or are someone who provides care for a senior citizen, you should be aware of GCMs and the services they provide.

Generally speaking a GCM is a specialist who assists older adults and their caregivers with the changing and complex needs associated with aging. These are professionals who specialize in assisting older people and their families in sorting out their long-term care arrangements and have training in gerontology, social work, nursing or counseling. GCMs are usually called upon by the family of an elderly person to conduct a care planning assessment in order to identify the medical, physical, functional and social or emotional needs of the senior, and to offer an individualized plan of recommendations. They are then available to implement the plan.

According to Susan Lewin, president of the New England Chapter of Professional Geri-

atric Care Managers and principal of Generations LLC in Brookline, a GCM can assist older adults to enhance their quality of life in the following ways:

- Conduct a comprehensive in-home evaluation to identify areas of concern and need for assistance — of health care condition and needs, physical environment and necessary modifications, financial and legal affairs, short and long term housing arrangements, etc.

- Help screen, arrange and monitor in-home care and other services; or assist with locating supportive housing options, such as retirement communities, assisted living residences or nursing homes.

- Serve as an advocate for the client in relationships with health care providers and other professionals to represent the client's interests; make referrals to qualified medical, legal and financial professionals to help meet identified needs; and counsel, educate and advocate on the client's behalf to help meet both short and long term needs.

- Act as liaison to family members at a distance, both to make sure things are going well

and to alert family members to new problems; and offer guidance and support to family caregivers who may be feeling the stress of their care giving responsibilities.

- Review financial and legal issues to help preserve assets and protect against unnecessary financial expenditures; explain and help resolve issues regarding Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security and Long Term Care insurance

If any of the above describes your particular issue or need, perhaps a GCM could help you. Contact the New England Chapter of Geriatric Care Managers (617-426-3533 or www.gcm-newengland.org) for the names of a few GCMs in your area with whom to discuss your particular needs. You should interview a few before deciding on one with whom to work. For a national directory, go to www.caremanager.org to find a GCM in most all 50 states.

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