



Home Care Services for Seniors

www.readyhands.com

Summer-Fall 2012

To Our Clients and Friends:

October marks our 10-year anniversary serving clients in Northern Virginia. Ready Hands has experienced robust growth in each of those years, and for this we are thankful to the clients, families and professionals who have placed their trust in us.

In this issue, we highlight a promising trend toward more availability of physicians willing to make house calls for patients unable

to travel to the doctor's office. We think that physician house calls make excellent sense and fill a huge need.

We also introduce the newest addition to our nursing staff, Linda Emonds, R.N. And, as always, we proudly announce our most recent Quarterly Recognition Award recipients. Ultimately, our ability to employ the best Home Care Aides is what most sets us apart.

The Ready Hands Home Care Team

Physician House Calls Making a Comeback

Remember not long ago when the doctor's house call was thought to be an outdated relic of the past? Well, it appears to be making something of a comeback, for some very sensible reasons.

One person who knows is Gary Swartz, J.D., M.P.A., Associate Executive Director of the American Academy of Home Care Physicians (AAHCP). He says that his organization's growing membership, Medicare payment trends and other indicators show a distinct increase in the provision of medical services in the home that once were only available in doctors' offices or clinics. He cites several contributing factors.

Technological innovations have been one major driver of the trend. Diagnostic tests such as portable x-rays, oxygen monitors and a myriad of other tools make in-home medical assessments more reliable than in the past. The electronic storage and transmission of health information and test results has also helped. The burgeoning growth in the ranks of seniors over age 85, many of whom are effectively homebound, has been another contributor. And, notes Swartz, home-based care may offer physicians and other health professionals a higher quality work-life balance and greater satisfaction than office-based care.

However, what is fueling the growth in house calls more than anything may be simple economics. Without the ability to be seen at home, a patient disabled by chronic

Ready Hands Welcomes Linda Emonds, R.N.

Ready Hands is pleased to announce that Linda Emonds, R.N. has joined our team as a full-time Nurse Supervisor. Our search for just the right individual for this position goes back many months. We were seeking a registered nurse with not only the necessary experience in eldercare, but also critical personal qualities like great customer service skills, good communication and a warm, friendly manner. We feel that we have found all of this and more in Linda.

Before joining Ready Hands, Linda served for eight years as Nurse Manager of Falmouth House Assisted Living, in Falmouth, Maine. There she was responsible for overseeing all aspects of the care of 40 residents of the facility and supervising a nursing department staff of 16. For part of her tenure at Falmouth House she served as Interim Director of Resident Care Services. In addition, Linda provided nurse case management services to scores of independent living residents of the Ocean-View retirement community, of which Falmouth House is a part.

Besides her extensive residential care background, Linda is also thoroughly familiar with the home care arena. Her most recent work in this field was serving as Home Care Case Manager for CareTree Healthcare in Portland, Maine, where she prepared care plans, supervised home care services, served as liaison between families and health providers and conducted staff educational activities. Previ-

House calls, continued on page 2

Emonds, continued on page 2

Four Employees Receive Recognition Award



Ready Hands is pleased to announce the most recent recipients of our quarterly recognition award. The award goes to aides who have achieved consistent positive feedback from clients, shown an enthusiastic willingness to step in and help out where needed and have complied with the policies and standards upon which our company depends. Each winner receives a certificate, a gift basket and a \$100 bonus.



Barbara Otumfo first joined us in 2004! Besides her two regular weekday assignments she covers every weekend with a third client as a relief aide. Her clients have nothing but wonderful things to say about Barbara, whom all of us know to be unfailingly cheerful and ready to help in whatever way necessary.



Ellen Achiaa, a recent addition to our staff, has shown herself in a few short months to be energetic, friendly and always responsive to the requests we make of her. On more than one occasion she has pitched in at the last minute to help with a client's care. She routinely goes above and beyond expectations.



Gifty Nyamekye, with Ready Hands only since November, 2011, has also stood out in that short time. Gifty always has an upbeat, cheerful attitude and never hesitates to do more than is asked of her. Her dedication and professionalism have been exemplary.

Josephine Osei, employed since July, 2011, is one of those employees that one recognizes instantly as a superior aide. Her intelligence, kindness and excellent judgment are obvious immediately. Her clients have been uniformly delighted with her care. We are honored to have her working with Ready Hands.

House calls, continued

illness may have no alternative other than an ambulance ride to the local emergency room—possibly the most costly and inefficient way of receiving care. Some patients make many such trips a year, a distressing routine that could be prevented by timely, proactive care at home. Home visits also have the potential of preventing expensive hospital admissions and re-admissions, with the attendant risks of hospital-acquired infections and other complications.

The potential benefits of house calls have not gone unnoticed by health insurers. The 2010 Accountable Care Act (“Obamacare”) authorized an Independence at Home demonstration program designed to bring home-based primary care to Medicare’s sickest and most frail seniors. In April, 2012, Medicare announced the practices and programs slated to participate in the project. Participating providers will not only be responsible for medical care, but also care coordination, the achievement of quality standards and reporting of satisfaction rates. According to a press release by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), up to 10,000 patients with chronic conditions will be able to get most of the care they need under the program. The AAHCP says that the program is similar to one operated by the Veteran’s Administration for decades which currently serves over 27,000 veterans. According to their website, “[The VA program] and similar programs operating in private practice, managed care, academic medical centers and integrated health systems have shown saving of 24-60% by moving care of these chronically ill patients from high cost institutions into the lower cost setting of the home.”

None of this is surprising to those physicians and other practitioners who have already been performing home visits. In Northern Virginia, one such physician is Alan Dappen, M.D. In 2001, after 25 years of traditional primary care practice, Dr. Dappen founded DocTalker Family Medicine to offer his patients better access to care, more convenience and superior quality. His practice, which now

includes several other physicians and providers serving over 4,000 patients, operates on a “communication-centered model.” As Dappen describes it, “Any patient who needs help can pick up the telephone and call 24/7 and reach the doctor, and the doctor is the first one on the line.” Many problems can be solved through a brief telephone consultation, and certainly there are many times that an office visit is necessary. However, home visits are an integral part of the practice, especially when chronic conditions preclude easy transport.

For family physician Robert Wilson, house calls are a more recent addition to the practice he shares with his physician wife. Although he has an active office load and has long managed the care of residents at a local nursing home, Dr. Wilson started making home visits in January, 2012. He expects this aspect of his work to be a significant component of his practice in the future. Besides Wilson, a number of other area physicians have been transitioning toward more services provided in the home. For the significant convenience it offers to homebound clients, the potential health care cost savings and the promise of better quality care, it is a welcome trend.

Emonds, continued

ously, Linda worked for Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield as a nurse medical reviewer/case manager and as a case manager for a community hospital.

At Ready Hands, Linda will perform initial client assessments and supervisory visits, collaborate in staffing decisions and generally contribute to all the processes by which we try to provide the best possible care and service to our clients and families. We consider ourselves fortunate to have found her and expect that our extended “family” of clients, employees and community senior-serving professionals will agree.