

Alzheimer's Reading Room

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Friday, August 10, 2012

Geriatric Care Managers: Could One Help You?


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A geriatric care manager is a specialist who helps families who are caring for love ones. They are trained and experienced in any of several fields related to Alzheimer's and related dementia care.

By *Marie Marley*

Carole Larkin

I recently had the opportunity to interview a highly qualified geriatric care manager - Carole Larkin, MA, CMC, CAEd, DCP, QDCS, EICS.

She owns [Third Age Services](#) LLC in Dallas.

Carole has a Master of Applied Gerontology degree with a specialty in Aging Services from the University of North Texas.

She is a certified specialist in "Best Care" practices by both the Alzheimer's Foundation of America and the National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners, and she has worked for the

Alzheimer's Association.

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Unlike other geriatric care managers, Carole has chosen to focus her career exclusively on helping families who have a loved one with dementia.


To her knowledge, she's the only member of the [National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers](#) (NAPGCM) who specializes in dementia. Other geriatric care managers help dementia patients as well as persons with other diseases, such as cancer or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Carole has just announced a new service in her practice. On July 1st, 2012 **she began offering long-distance consultations on virtually any problem related to dementia and dementia caregiving.**

During these consultations, being conducted by phone and email, she offers advice and opinions that directly relate to the specific problems that people call her with.

This includes issues such as assisted living or nursing home placement, driving privileges, dealing with difficult behaviors, problems with activities of daily living (such as bathing, dressing, sleeping, and eating), communication and motivation, among others.

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Carole also educates her clients about the biology of the disease and how it impacts caregiving, as well as what to look for next in the progression of the diseases. (See below for a more complete list of services offered by geriatric care managers.)

She says the most rewarding parts of her job are when she sees and hears the stress drain from the family members initially and then again at the end of the work when positive solutions have been found for all of the difficult problems.

What are geriatric care managers?

A geriatric care manager is a health and human services specialist who helps families who are caring for love ones. They are trained and experienced in any of several fields related to care management, including nursing, gerontology, social work or psychology.

Geriatric care management is a relatively new profession. It's rapidly growing, especially given the aging of the baby boomers.

Just what do these specialists do?

They provide a wide range of services, including:

1. Coming to the residence of the person with dementia and completing an extensive assessment of that person's circumstances, including, but not limited to, the personality of the person, family dynamics, funds available for care, a safety check of the residence, listing any medical issues and providing a list of other previously vetted professionals that might be needed for a consult. These could include eldercare attorneys, home health companies, senior real estate experts, remodeling companies, nursing homes and others.
2. Developing a care plan especially for that person and the family, outlining steps to be taken immediately as well as actions to be taken in the long-term.
3. Conducting educational sessions with the family to increase their knowledge of the patient's illness.
4. Monitoring the situation to assure things are going as planned.
5. Initial and continuing consultations via telephone or email.

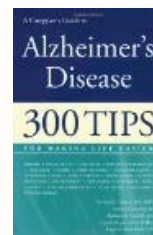
When might you need a geriatric care manager?

According to NAPGCM, several possible scenarios indicate you would benefit from having a geriatric care manager:

1. When you live at a distance and are worried that there is no one nearby to help with appointments and emergencies or to make sure there is food in the house and bills are being paid
2. When your loved one is forgetting to take medications but assures you it's not a problem
3. When your loved one shouldn't be driving and you can't figure out what to do
4. When you have to choose an assisted living facility or a nursing home and don't know how to start or where to look
5. When your loved one is suddenly living alone and you are concerned about whether he or she can conduct appropriate self-care
6. When your loved one's depression is interfering with sleeping, eating and interest in life
7. When you are wondering if your loved one should remain at home or move to a senior residence
8. When you are seeing signs of forgetfulness and don't know how to handle it
9. When your loved one needs help at home but refuses to allow it
10. When you want to make sure that your loved one is receiving Medicare benefits and all other available entitlements
11. When you need advice and support as a caregiver from a professional
12. When you find moldy food in the refrigerator on a regular basis
13. When you find bugs and cobwebs in the bathtub
14. When they are wearing the same clothes every day or wearing stained clothes every day
15. When their doctor says that they are missing or cancelling appointments on a routine



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Are geriatric care managers certified?

Yes. They are certified by NAPGCM and are required to participate in continuing education in order to maintain their certification.

What's the best way to find a qualified geriatric care manager?

You can go to the NAPGCM website to find certified care managers in your area. If there are none, the work can be carried out through phone and email contact.

How much do they charge and who pays them?

Geriatric care managers are privately paid. Medicare does not pay for this service, but some long-term care insurance companies do. Care managers may work by the hour or charge a flat fee for the assessment and an hourly fee after that. Most are independent companies, although a few work for home care companies or other senior businesses. Rates vary widely and are usually in a range of \$75 to \$150 per hour.

Although this may pinch some family budgets, according to Carole the families usually end up saving money in the long run. This is because she can often help them access benefits they know nothing about.

Also, finding the right facility -- a duty Carole performs -- can help prevent having to move the patient repeatedly. In addition, families save a lot of time by not having to visit facility after facility trying to determine which one is best. While doing telephone and email consultations Carole can give options that the family has never even considered.

I really wish I'd had a geriatric care manager when I was taking care of my soul mate. As described in my book, **Come Back Early Today: A Memoir of Love, Alzheimer's and Joy**, I faced numerous difficult and extremely stressful problems, the most agonizing of which was getting him into a nursing home. I thought I'd lose my mind before I'd accomplish that.

Someone like Carole could have helped me tremendously, but I didn't know anything about these professionals. If I had it to do over again, hiring a care manager would be the first thing I'd do.

For more information about Carole's face-to-face or telephone/email services go to her website at www.thirdageservices.com.

You can also find additional general information about geriatric care managers at the [NAPGCM's](http://www.napgcm.com) website.



Marie Marley, a caregiver for her delightfully colorful Romanian soul mate, later wrote an award-winning book, [Come Back Early Today: A Story of Love, Alzheimer's and Joy](#). It narrates their 30-year love story and also illustrates her solutions to 14 issues Alzheimer's caregivers face - everything from diagnosis and difficult behaviors to nursing home and hospice care. Marie is a grant writer at the American Academy of Family Physicians.

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Posted by [Bob DeMarco](#) at [8/10/2012 10:24:00 AM](#)

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 **mejco** 1 week ago

I'm so glad you posted about the valuable services of a Geriatric Care Managers. Our daughters were so overwhelmed with the sudden need for expert help for their Dad and me. They knew they were over their heads. Care Managers are not all equal. The first one they had was all talk and no action, but they persisted in finding one who would do the job. She was able to put them in a network of services that greatly relieved our daughters. They took care of some hoops the girls couldn't jump through themselves.

I can't relate all...

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 **Marie Marley** 1 week ago

As I mentioned in the article, I sure wish I had known Carole when I was a caregiver. It would have made a tremendous difference and reduced my stress over dealing with difficult family members - just to name one thing

Like Reply

 **Max Wallack** 2 weeks ago

This is a wonderful, helpful article.

I believe a few phone conversations with Carole can make a huge difference in being an Alzheimer's caregiver!

3 people liked this. Like Reply

 **Brenda** 2 weeks ago

Bob and Marie, thank you for this post. Geriatric Care Managers are in a unique position to provide an objective viewpoint, resources and ongoing support to families. We can save you time, money and heartbreak. My philosophy is that there is always something you can do to improve the situation, even if

you can't cure the underlying problem(s). This is why I love the Alzheimer's Reading Room and recommend it to my clients.

Brenda Shorkend, MA, Geriatric Care Manager

2 people liked this.

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Brenda Lecco, Care Manager 2 weeks ago

Geriatric care managers are an invaluable resource and can often prevent placement in a nursing home. If nursing home or assisted living care is right for a family, we can work with the facilities to ensure the best possible care for a loved one.

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