

Chronic Conditions in Older Adults – The Need for Integrated Care



Chronic conditions in older adults are very common and can often be managed in a way that offers the patients varying degrees of relief as well as a higher quality of

life. Chronic disease can be defined as a condition that lasts longer than three months, often persists a lifetime, and cannot be prevented by vaccines or cured by medication. There are many reasons why people get sick and stay sick, some of which are non-modifiable such as age, gender and genetics, while others are modifiable and include a person's ability to change things such as obesity, smoking, nutrition, and a sedentary lifestyle.

Statistically, 80% of adults 65 years of age and older have at least one chronic condition, while 68% have two or more conditions. However, it is not uncommon to see five or six chronic conditions taking place simultaneously among the elderly.

The 10 most common chronic conditions for adults 65 years of age and older include:

1. Hypertension – 58%
2. High Cholesterol – 47%
3. Arthritis – 31%
4. Ischemic Heart Disease – 29%
5. Diabetes – 27%
6. Chronic Kidney Disease – 18%
7. Heart Failure – 14%
8. Depression – 14%
9. Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia – 11%
10. Chronic Obstructive pulmonary Disease (COPD) – 11%

People with chronic disease often have difficulty with basic tasks like lifting objects, walking up steps, or even common activities of daily living (ADL's) such as bathing, dressing or eating. The health consequences of chronic illnesses are extensive and often lead to increased emergency room visits, significantly higher hospitalizations, and often long-term nursing home placement, all of which translate into higher health care costs.

Treating Chronic Conditions through Integrated Care

Caring for individuals with chronic conditions is best accomplished through strategic "integrated care" which is simply the process of various health professionals

communicating with one another to establish the very best protocol for the patient. Unfortunately, within today's healthcare system, the older adult is often required to travel from one specialist to another with very little discussion between the medical professionals regarding the patient's care.

In the early 1970's a healthcare organization in San Francisco developed a model that would eventually become known as PACE or Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly. The PACE program very effectively accomplishes the arduous task of strategically integrating care for the elderly with chronic conditions by bringing together all the health care professions an older person would need to assist them in managing their chronic conditions.

CentraCare, with Centers in Battle Creek and Kalamazoo, follows the nationally recognized PACE model of coordinated care by creating a specific plan of care for each elderly participant in the program. This is accomplished by each health care discipline (Primary Care Provider, Nurse

Case Manager, Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Recreational Therapist, Dietician, and Social Worker) personally assessing the participant and then collectively developing a specific plan of care that will help the participant best manage any chronic conditions they may be experiencing. The participant then has to visit only one location for their health care needs and transportation is provided. Meals, opportunities for socialization and in-home care is also provided as needed.

This type of integrated care has proven over and over again to increase the participant's health and overall quality of life, as well as keeping them from placement in a nursing home for as long as possible while reducing their health care costs. Another tremendous benefit for almost every PACE participant is that they don't have to pay for any of the services they receive.

To learn more about the integrated care services provided by CentraCare you may visit www.mycentracare.com or call the center at (269) 441-9300.



CentraCare's experienced staff will lovingly care for your elderly loved one at our Battle Creek Day Center location to give you relief. **At NO CHARGE* to you!**

WE PROVIDE: Transportation, Nutritious Meal & Snack, Socialization, Assistance with Personal Care, and Cognitively Stimulating Activities.



200 W. Michigan Avenue | Battle Creek, MI 49017 | 269-448-5460 | www.mycentracare.com

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