

The importance of in-home health care in a changing world

It is estimated that there will soon be more people over the age of 65 than there will be of school age, the first time this has happened in this century.

The fastest-growing segment of the population is the 85-plus group, many of whom have at least one chronic condition (arthritis, heart disease, cancer, or diabetes).

These and other chronic conditions often have a negative impact on a person's activities of daily living — bathing, dressing, and mobility for example. Many seniors find that they simply aren't able to do what they used to do.

Yet, the majority of these individuals do not need 24-hour skilled nursing care, and most people prefer to remain independent in their own home. So what do they do?

Some people rely on family and friends to help with tasks that have become cumbersome or impossible. Many others turn to a home health care agency for assistance.

There are different types of home health care agencies. Some are "skilled nursing" agencies.

Memorial hospital homecare is an example of this type of agency.

They provide services such as wound care, therapies, and other physician-directed nursing care, as well as some personal care assistance.

This type of Homecare is typically for a short duration, after a hospital stay

for example, and is usually covered by Medicare or other insurance.

Another type of home health care is the kind provided by the Sheridan Senior Center In-Home Services Department. These services are for the purpose of assisting individuals with homemaking (light housekeeping, grocery shopping) and/or personal care (shower or grooming assistance).

The purpose of these services is to provide a healthy and safe environment which promotes and maintains individual independence.

These services are provided by trained, skilled, experienced, state licensed home health aides under the direction of a registered nurse with many years of homecare experience.

Whether a person needs homemaking, personal care, or both, there is an hourly rate charged on a sliding fee scale.

People pay according to their income, making excellent services affordable for everyone. How can we do this? Funds are provided through the Wyoming Department of Health, Aging Division,



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to supplement these services.

The services are supplemented because it has been shown that individuals who receive help in their home are often safer (taking fewer falls, eating better, living healthier), thus postponing or avoiding extended care facility (nurs-

ing home) admittance.

Not only is this a quality-of-life issue, but also a financial one.

The average cost of nursing home care in Wyoming is about \$5,000 per month.

The average cost of in-home services is less than \$200 per month. Of course, the reason for the huge discrepancy is the vast difference in level of care and hours of service.

The extended care facilities provide 24-hour skilled nursing care, plus room and board. The in-home services program provides, on average, fewer than 10 hours per month of service in the home.

Here in Sheridan County, we are fortunate to have two fine extended-care facilities — Westview and Sheridan Manor. And if a person is in need of 24-hour skilled nursing care, I would not

hesitate to recommend either of these great facilities.

However, if a person is looking at being proactive in maintaining his or her independence and quality of life, getting some services in the home early on is important.

We recently surveyed the in-home services clients.

When asked if the services which they receive help them to remain independent in their home, 100 percent of those responding agreed.

So if you have a condition, whether temporary or permanent, that limits what you can do, give us a call!

Our registered nurse will do a home visit, and together, you can decide what services would benefit you and help you to stay independent.

Call the Senior Center at 672-2240 and ask for In-Home Services.

We will be happy to answer your questions or set an appointment.

Diane Feather is the Director of In-Home Services at the Sheridan Senior Center. This program serves approximately 170 people in the community each month.

Center Stage is written by friends of the Senior Center for the Sheridan Community. It is a collection of insights and stories related to living well at every age.