



February 2011

Geriatric Care Management: The Good, The Bad, The Funny and The Ugly

The past 27 years have been rich with relationships that have germinated from my career as a Professional Geriatric Care Manager (PGCM). The ability to do the work we do comes not only from prepared educational tracks, but also from a passion to secure the highest quality of life for elders or others in need of advocacy.



Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC, is the Founder and Executive Director of Eldercare Services and is a Fellow and Recent Past President of the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers.

The **good** is, and has been, in seeing the relief of a spouse who has learned how to talk “dementia” or a family that is no longer in conflict on what is the best journey for their aging parents across the country. It is also coaching both family and professional caregivers in learning how to respect dignity while providing care to a dependent adult. The **good** is, and has been, in creating avenues to enhance the quality of one’s life, despite loss or disability, as well as in reducing the overall stress for family caregivers. The **good** is the client in his mid-90’s who calls to tell me that he has the highest quality of life he has had in years, thanks to our caregiver cooking him healthy food, our PGCM advocacy when he was in the ICU and his personal trainer that keeps his body as sharp as his mind.

The **bad** is a discharge, from a hospital setting, with conflicting medications and seeing a patient re-hospitalized because she didn’t have an advocate. The **bad** is seeing the overcaring “well spouse” of someone with a dementia have a stroke and die because he would not take the advice of the Care Manager and the family to share the care. The **bad** is conflicting directions in health care or legal tools – such as individuals buying into investments so that they can qualify

for something for which they were already qualified. The **bad** is seeing a community filled with wonderful support systems lose them to poor planning on the part of our local and state governments.

The **funny** is calling a client to remind him to take a bed time medication and he puts the phone down to take the medication, but forgets to come back and hang it up – so you leave your warm house at 10PM to check on the client – who forgot he was talking to you. The **funny** is the night a caregiver called and said she is deathly afraid of cats and one is in the house – so at midnight you go to secure the caregiver and the client and sleep on the sofa only to see the cat peering in the window from the yard at 3 am! The **funny** is the client that says in all honesty to the hospital social worker that she had been married for 100 years (it is only 76 years) – but who’s counting after 75! The **funny** is the client who can remember I had poison oak and told me to use baking soda for the itch; she asked me about the poison oak for 5 years, but can’t remember anything else.

The **ugly** is seeing clients who have been abused by people who befriend them under false pretense - those who call to scam seniors who are low

income or vulnerable. The **ugly** is the health care provider who refuses to see a patient because the patient was 15 minutes late for an appointment (caused by a personal accident). The **ugly** is the person, who doesn’t have all the facts, giving families wrong information about entitlements or benefits – leading them to make decisions for wrong reasons.

Yes, as PGCMs, we face challenges every day, but 9 times out of 10 we are able to make life just a little less stressful for families and bring dignity to those who need care and advocacy. The career is much more rewarding than discouraging and, speaking for most of my staff and those who are members of the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers, extremely fulfilling and satisfying.

So, whether shipping a client’s cat across the country or moving a client to Canada or from Florida to Walnut Creek, we have variety in our work and it is always centered on the client’s values and making life the best it can be at any age.

Ask a Geriatric Care Manager what they do – there is something for every aspect of aging.

Eldercare Services provides Counseling, Support Groups, Home Care and Care Management to aid Family Caregivers. If you or someone you know could benefit from self-care, give us a call at (866) 760-1808.



If you would like a specific list of what a Geriatric Care Manager can do for you, send us an email at Info@EldercareAnswers.com and we will email you a list of services we can provide.



Eldercare Services works with Seniors and their families in Walnut Creek, Alameda County, San Francisco and the Tri-Valley, CA.

Visit us on the web at <http://www.EldercareAnswers.com> for more information.

Community Classes

Walnut Creek

Families Dealing with Dementia

3rd Friday of every month from 10 AM to Noon

1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94595

Class Registration: Please call at least 3 days ahead

For more information regarding classes and support groups, visit us at www.EldercareAnswers.com or call (925) 937-2018, (415) 469-8300 or email us at info@EldercareAnswers.com

Support Groups

When concerns for aging family members are part of every day life, or when they interfere with work, your health or other relationships, you need to join a support group.

Caring for An Aging Family Member

2nd Thursday of every month from 7 to 8:30 PM

1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94595

1st Tuesday of every month from 6 to 7:30 PM

605 A Chenery St., San Francisco, CA 94131

Cost for Support Groups: None

Support Group Registration: Not required