



Gwinnett Medical Center's Extended Care Center Dedicated Much Needed Gazebo to Residents

The grounds of the GECC were recently filled with families, residents, staff, community leaders and a sense of accomplishment for the dedication ceremony of a much needed garden gazebo. A sight three years in the making, those who had devoted time, money and support for this project gathered for its dedication to the GECC residents. The inviting white structure with lighting and fan surrounded by a beautiful butterfly garden will allow the residents and staff to use the courtyard year-round for activities such as painting, woodworking, cookouts, socials, gardening and Red Hat Society meetings. Photo by Robert Connell.

ElderCare

Visiting Nurse /Hospice Atlanta Sees More Complex Diagnoses Among Aging Population

Of the more than 18,000 patients Visiting Nurse /Hospice Atlanta served in 2008, 70 percent of them were 60 or older.

Among this aging population, Visiting Nurse /Hospice Atlanta is seeing a trend toward more complicated cases, especially in the Care Management division. Caring for people with severe cognitive and functional impairments is never easy, but with seniors the care requirements are even more complex - multiple diagnoses may include heart conditions, kidney disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, geriatric depression and many other chronic diseases.

According to Barbara Dale, LCSW, Clinical Director of the Care Management division, the percentage of clients with mental health issues has increased dramatically in the past couple of years. This is especially true in the SOURCE and CCSP (Community Care Service Program) programs; both are partnership programs with government agencies to improve life for the elderly and functionally-impaired.

SOURCE (Service Options Using Resources in a Community Environment) is an enhanced, care management program designed to delay or prevent the need for hospital and nursing home admissions by integrating primary med-



ical care with supportive home care services. Visiting Nurse /Hospice Atlanta became a SOURCE provider in 2006.

To ensure that its clinicians are trained to handle these cases effectively and deliver good patient outcomes, Visiting Nurse /Hospice Atlanta has taken several proactive steps.

"We are offering more in-house clinical supervision these days," explains Dale. "I supervise the individual clinicians on our team who want to become certified LCSWs. Another member of our staff offers group supervision to discuss clinical issues and give our nurses and social

workers extra support in their practice."

Later this year, an outside consultant will give a supervision workshop focusing on clinical and ethical best practices. Dale also looks to hire clinicians with deeper mental health experience, preferably masters level social workers.

Another medical complication for seniors is falling. One program designed to reduce falls is the Falls Prevention Collaborative Quality Improvement Project, a cutting-edge program operated in partnership with the Atlanta Regional Commission and APS Healthcare which assesses patients' risk of falling.

Visiting Nurse /Hospice Atlanta clinicians visit clients' homes to develop an assessment with proposed solutions to reduce the risk of falls. The program looks at five potential barriers to falls prevention: Education, Exercise, Vision Assessment, Medication Assessment, and Home Safety Assessment. The program can include physical therapy, occupational therapy, collaboration with the physician for medication review, and needed home modifications. It is proving to be a great tool to keeping elders out of institutions, including hospitals.

For more information about Visiting Nurse /Hospice Atlanta's Care Management Division, contact Dorothy_Davis@vnhs.org.

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