

# RN Solutions in the Care of Older Adults

## Person- and family-centred care

Person- and family-centred care is the third in a series that presents four profiles of emerging roles for nurses who work with older adults. Each of the stories follows “Mr. Smith and his wife” as they try and meet the multiple challenges of his complex care needs. In response to these challenges, we highlight innovative solutions that arise from nurses’ keen recognition of the gaps in care and their commitment to finding ways to address them.



## ISSUE

Registered nurses are in the best position to work with older adults and their informal caregivers. RNs can provide the knowledge and tools these caregivers need to manage care and gain confidence in maintaining care at home.

Mr. Smith and his wife have been managing his increasingly complex care at home until a recent emergency visit for treatment of COPD. The hospital identified him and his wife as needing more information to prepare for his imminent need for increased caregiving. Both Mr. Smith and his wife would like him to remain at home under her care for as long as possible.

If you were related to Mr. Smith, how would you expect health providers to prepare him and his wife to manage his increasing needs in their home?

### Did you know . . .

With the right support and nursing intervention Mr. and Mrs. Smith can remain independent and successfully cope with the changes they face.

### RN solutions address gaps in person- and family-centred care

In emerging nursing roles across the country, nurses lead innovative educational programs that provide the information older adults and their caregivers need to meet these challenges.

### Person- and family-centred care facts

- Aging is not a disease.
- According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, 93 per cent of seniors in Canada live at home and want to stay there as long as possible (CIHI, 2011a).
- One out of every six seniors receives home care services in Canada (CPSI, 2013).
- Increasing the use of technology in home care will enable better client education and self-management (CNA, 2013).
- The number of health-care services seniors use is largely driven by the number of chronic conditions they have, not their age (CIHI, 2011b).
- 33 per cent of seniors living in the community have three or more chronic conditions (Gilmore & Park, 2005).

## RNs help informal caregivers gain confidence and manage stress

Online RN-led stress management and coping programs are now being offered more frequently. Through these innovative, interactive programs, informal caregivers learn to anticipate and manage the daily pressures of caregiving. In a series of intervention sessions, interprofessional health providers (including nurses) coach family caregivers while answering questions they find important. In one such program, piloted in Quebec, nurses led seven weekly psycho-educational sessions and responded to caregiver questions (by phone or online) three times each week. For those completing the program, results showed that informal caregivers felt more confident with caregiving demands and found their roles less daunting (Ducharme et al., 2011). This proactive intervention helped caregivers begin to plan for their loved one's future care needs.

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## PREP nurses tailor plans to support informal caregivers

The PREP system brings RN interventions to informal caregivers or family members who are providing long term care to frail older adults at home. The program name stems from its three goals: to increase preparedness, enrichment and predictability in family caregiving situations. PREP nurses travel to meet with patients and their caregivers in their home, once they are discharged from an acute care setting. Together, nurses and caregivers create a specific care plan that gives caregivers actions and strategies to use. Afterward, the PREP nurse stays in regular contact with caregivers, supporting and coaching them by phone and with in-home visits for three to six months. The PREP project enables caregivers to feel more prepared and confident in the care they provide and to experience a sense that the care is more predictable (Archbold et al., 1995).

## Nurse-led HPDP interventions

Nurse-led interventions to promote health and prevent disease have been shown to help seniors living at home with chronic conditions. One home care intervention led by an RN in southern Ontario showed how recognition of worsening health conditions can prevent or minimize disability and prevent or delay institutionalization — thereby increasing patients' autonomy and enhancing their health-related quality of life (HRQL). This RN-led intervention included monthly home visits, comprehensive health assessments (using standardized screening tools) and the coordination of health and social services. Central to its success was the collaborative, individualized followup by the specialized interprofessional team, which used multifaceted evidence-based strategies that promoted autonomy and self-management (Markle-Reid et al., 2006a). Not only did the intervention engage patients over the program's 12-month duration, improvements in HRQL measures came at no added cost compared to standard home care (Markle-Reid, Browne, & Gafni, 2011; Markle-Reid, 2006b).

## RNs provide person- and family-care solutions

Innovative nurse-led and person-centered care strategies empower patients and their caregivers to improve their quality of life while demonstrating cost-effective solutions in health-care delivery.

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