

PUBLISHER'S PROFILE

CARING FOR YOUR PARENTS AND FAMILY

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I have been practicing for over 20 years, focusing primarily on geriatric medical care. One common theme I have noticed is the stress, sons and daughters go through caring for their aging parents.

Part of my job is diagnosing diseases, making treatment recommendations, and guiding patients through the path to feeling better. More importantly the other part is advising and helping families navigate the complicated healthcare system, manage expectations, and hopefully improve outcomes. Here are some of the challenges I encounter on a day to day basis in my practice.

Don't ignore warning signs. If you notice something about your parents medically related, seek medical advice sooner than later. It's always better to know things early in a disease process, which can affect the prognosis. Balancing time to care for your family, career, and parents can be very challenging. As folks slowly lose their abilities, logistics and emotions become the focus. Most of you won't have the experience with these situations until you are dealing with your own parents.

The geriatric population sometimes doesn't make it easy to help them as they try to hang on to their independence. They may not share medical issues, and this can complicate your ability to help. It's tough handling medications, physician appointments, and other daily logistics, including keeping them entertained and not bored. Having intellectual stimulation and regular activities in their life is vital to their quality of life and maintaining independence. Taking the car keys away can be a very traumatic moment for them and you.



On top of this, while caring for your parents, knowing aspects of the healthcare system can be complex and frustrating. Everything from insurance coverage, medication charges, equipment paperwork, and making sure they are safe in their living environment creates tremendous stress and anxiety. Many services like home health care, hospice, and physical/occupational therapy are important, when utilized in the proper and timely way.

Finally, over the years, I have realized that it takes a team approach to help the geriatric population like our parents. This includes the physician but great staff at senior housing locations, visiting nurses and therapists, family members, and even others in the community. Working together as a team and having great communication with families, has really made a difference for patients in my practice.

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