

Home Care Program Continues At Muhlenberg



According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 7.6 million Americans receive home care. However, it can be overwhelming for the patient and present significant challenges for family members and care givers. Home care, an expansion of a hospital's healthcare services in the comfort and convenience of a patient's home, is an alternative choice for family and caregivers that can enhance a patient's health and quality of life.

Over the years, the Home Care Program at Muhlenberg has established a reputation for quality and innovation, having served the residents of Union, Middlesex and Somerset Counties since 1975. And despite the closure of acute care services at Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center, "the Home Care Program will continue uninterrupted, delivering the exceptional service the community has been accustomed to," says Ellen Gusick, Director of the Home Care Program.

The Program's team of highly-qualified registered nurses; physical, occupational and speech therapists, certified home health aides and clinical dieticians and social workers will continue to provide excellent home care to assist with the patient's recovery.

To dispel common thinking, "home healthcare is not reserved for the senior adult as it offers benefits across the age spectrum,"

Gusick points out. However, the type of home care services needed is contingent on the patient's health status and the support he/she receives from family and friends." Home care services include skilled nursing care such as wound assessment and intravenous therapy; physical, occupational and speech therapy; social work services, homehealthaide services; and dietary counseling.

The Home Care Program at Muhlenberg also provides Telehealth Monitoring, which assists the physician and home care nurse to react quickly to changes in the patient's condition. The telehealth monitor measures blood pressure, weight and oxygen levels. This program has been very successful in allowing for rapid intervention in the patient's care, decreasing emergency room visits.

Patients in this program who benefit typically have a diagnosis of congestive heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), recent heart surgery or diabetes.

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"Today, home health provides new and innovative community - and family-based programs outside of conventional care, such as the Home Care Program's Plainfield Partnership for Healthier Children and Plainfield Connections," adds, Jenny Fischbein, Manager of both programs. The Partnership's visiting nurse provides education, support and referrals to families

whose children are diagnosed with lead poisoning. One of 12 programs in New Jersey, the Partnership seeks to eliminate a child's exposure to lead based paint and other sources, teaching the family techniques to decrease the blood lead level. "On the other hand, Plainfield Connections is a community outreach program designed for pregnant women and their children up to one year of age." Here women are connected or reconnected with prenatal care – with a healthcare professional making home visits to provide support, information and referrals to needed resources. Currently, Connections cares for 80 families in Plainfield.

In 2007, Muhlenberg's Home Care Program received special distinction. It was recognized as one of the top home care agencies in the nation for patient satisfaction — achieving Press Ganey scores in the 99th percentile. "This is the highest recognition a Program such as ours can receive and is exemplary of the commitment and dedication of our team," states Anthony Cuzzola, Vice President, Solaris Health System. The program is licensed by the New Jersey Department of Health, accredited by the Joint Commission of Accreditation for Hospital Organizations, and is certified to provide home health services by Medicare and Medicaid.

"The Home Care Program has and will continue to play a vital role in the communities it serves," Ellen Gusick, concludes. For additional information in the Home Care Program at Muhlenberg, please call 908.668.2253.