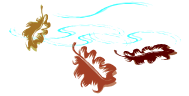




# Straight Talk

## A Fresh Approach to Senior Care Management

### What is Senior Care Management?



by Colleen Van Horn RN, BSN, PHN, CCM

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Welcome to the first edition of *Straight Talk*, a bimonthly publication of Innovative Healthcare Consultants, Inc. My name is Colleen Van Horn and I am a geriatric nurse case manager who started this company in 1997. At that time, I noticed a need that was not being met for our senior population. The aging process affects the entire family, often creating a strain on their health and emotional, psychological, and financial resources. Our goal is to maintain the well being, independence and dignity of the older family members while being sensitive to the family's needs and resources.

In general, Care Managers know each client personally and make recommendations which encompass every aspect of the client's life. The Care Manager assesses the social, psychological and physical needs of the older person and develops individualized care plans. The Care Manager combines experience in nursing and elder care with knowledge of complicated government services such as Medicare, Medi-Cal and Social Security as well as local agencies, organizations and services in order to help the client maintain the highest quality of life possible.

I feel strongly about educating and advocating for my family, clients and friends. I come in contact with information daily that can benefit the senior population. I thought it would be helpful to share this information with the people who would benefit the most from it.

If you have a topic of interest or would like specific information, please let me know. You can reach me at (760) 731-1334 or email [cvanhorn@cts.com](mailto:cvanhorn@cts.com). I look forward to hearing comments and suggestions from you about *Straight Talk*.

Colleen

### Safe Driving for the Holidays



With the holidays approaching, these "red flags" of declining driving skills will alert you to the problem. Let's all have a safe holiday season!

\* A pattern of close calls, violations or collisions, even if they're minor.

- \* Consistent and increasing difficulty in noticing pedestrians, signs, objects, or other vehicles.
- \* Observable change in emotions: undue nervousness behind the wheel.
- \* Rapid onset of fatigue from driving
- \* Medical conditions that may directly, or may as a result of medications, impair driving.
- \* Observable decline in mental abilities: no longer using turn signals or mirrors; driving more slowly; becoming confused in simple driving situations; getting lost; making poor or slow decisions in traffic.
- \* Increasing confrontations with other drivers who act aggressively.
- \* Observable decline in physical abilities.

## Medicare Updates

### Discount Prescription Medication Program

On February 1, 2000 an important new law went into effect allowing Medicare patients to purchase their prescription medications at lower MediCal rates.

To receive the reduced rate, a Medicare patient simply shows his or her Medicare card and prescription to a pharmacy that accepts MediCal patients' prescriptions.

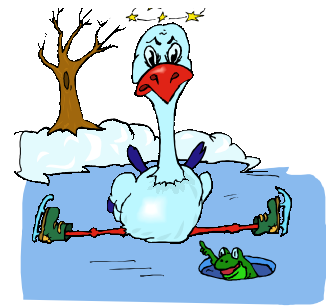
It is important to note that:

- ✓ Though at a discount price, it is the Medicare patient, not the State, who pays for the medication.
- ✓ Only those pharmacies having access to MediCal prices via a computer link may give the discounted rates.

### Healthcare Options

Medicare beneficiaries are automatically eligible to return to original fee-for-service Medicare and have guaranteed access to some Medigap policies if their Medicare+Choice organizations leave the program.

## Preventing Falls



*“Falls are the leading cause of fatal and non fatal injuries in people 65 and older in the United States. Falls can happen anytime and anyplace to people of any age, but most falls by people age 65 and older occur in the home during everyday activities”*

For seniors, falls in and around the home are the most frequently occurring accident. The most common serious injuries resulting from falls are head injuries, wrist fractures, spine fractures and hip fractures.

The cost of falls among older people is enormous because of the high death toll, disabling conditions and recovery in hospitals and rehabilitation institutions. The United States spends an estimated \$20.2 billion annually for the treatment of injuries to older people after falls.

Falls can be a major life-changing event that robs you of your independence. Falls are not natural occurrences... **you can prevent falls!**

## Fire/Burn Prevention

Safety in your home should always include fire/burn prevention.



Most everyone has a smoke detector in their home; however, those with more than one floor should have a detector on each level. Each detector should be tested each month and batteries replaced once a year. Inexpensive smoke detectors are available for the hearing impaired.

Every home should have a fire extinguisher mounted in the kitchen, garage and workshop. Learn how to use your fire extinguisher before

there is an emergency. Never use your extinguisher for a large fire. Get out immediately and call 911

Prepare a floor plan of your home showing at least two ways out of each room. Sleep with your bedroom door closed. In the event of fire, it helps to hold back heat and smoke. If a door feels hot, do not open it; escape through another door or window.

Have your furnace inspected by a professional prior to the start of every heating season. Don't leave space heaters operating when you're not in the room. Keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything that might burn, including the wall.

## Fall Safety Checklist



Use the following checklist to help minimize the risk of falling in your home:

- *Remove throw rugs and tack carpet down where loose.*
- *Have a lamp or light switch that you can easily reach without getting out of bed. Have a flashlight handy.*
- *Install a telephone near the bed and where the person usually sits.*
- *Use night-lights in the bedroom, bathroom and hallways.*
- *Place a chair near the bed to assist the person to pull up should he/she fall.*
- *Shorten or remove telephone cords or electric cords on floors.*
- *Have light switches at both ends of stairs and halls. Install handrails on both sides of stairs.*
- *Add grab bars in shower, tub and toilet areas.*
- *Purchase a bath seat and install a hand-held shower.*
- *Use nonslip adhesive strips in the shower or tub.*
- *Purchase a step stool with high and sturdy handrails.*
- *Use bath mats with suction cups.*
- *Use nonslip adhesive strips or a mat in shower or tub.*
- *Turn on the lights when you go into the house at night.*
- *Exchange low-watt light bulbs for bulbs with higher wattage to increase brightness in rooms.*
- *Reduce clutter throughout the house and on stairs.*
- *Wear nonslip, low-heeled shoes or slippers that fit snugly. Don't walk around in stocking feet.*
- *Paint outside stairs with a mixture of sand and paint for better traction. Keep outdoor walkways clear and well lighted.*
- *Paint the edges of outdoor steps that are especially narrow or are higher or lower than the rest.*
- *Watch your alcohol intake. More than two drinks per day can cause unsteadiness.*
- *Have your hearing and eyesight tested regularly.*
- *Review medications with your doctor or pharmacist. Some drugs, including over-the-counter drugs, can make you drowsy, dizzy and unsteady.*
- *If you feel dizzy or light-headed, sit down or stay seated until your head clears. Stand up slowly.*



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A FRESH APPROACH TO  
SENIOR CARE MANAGEMENT.



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## Mission Statement

Innovative Healthcare Consultants, Inc. is committed to assisting individuals and their families plan for and access all levels of health care necessary to maximize their health, independence and safety.

Based on a thorough assessment, IHC will provide a professional and confidential review of funding and available health care options.

As a client advocate, IHC will assist with the development and implementation of an individualized plan to meet your health care needs.

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