

The ABC's of Home Care

For those who are new to home care it can seem like an alphabet soup of various designations and services. Today you have many options in the levels of care to help you at home. It's important to understand the differences in each designation because you want to be sure you are receiving the appropriate care for your needs. Also, different levels of care are paid for in different ways such as, Medicare, Medicaid, long term care insurance, out-of-pocket, etc.

HHA - home health aide - a trained and certified health-care worker who provides assistance to a patient in the home with personal care (such as, hygiene) and who monitors the patient's condition. The scope of HHA's tasks are preparation of meals, administration of medicine, special skin care, use of medical equipment, supplies and devices, change of dressing to wounds, performance of simple measurements and tests to routinely monitor the patient's medical condition, performance of a maintenance exercise program, lifting and moving the person, and care of an ostomy.

Some examples of situations in which HHA's are helpful:

1. Wheelchair and bed bound patients who need bed transfers and hoist lifts to help them to move in and out of sitting positions.
2. Patients who have chronic incontinence and require personal hygiene care.
3. Patients with diabetes, blood pressure problems, or respiratory problems that need their conditions monitored and recorded.

CNA - certified nurse's aide - a trained and certified health-care worker who provides assistance to a patient who is recovering from surgery, disease or has an illness. The scope of the CNA's tasks include bathing, undressing, dressing, ambulatory care, draping patients, changing linens, preparing beds, running errands, performing light housekeeping, feeding assistance, recording fluid input and output, taking patient vitals, stocking medical supplies, and emptying catheter bags. CNA's work under the supervision of a registered nurse.

Some examples of situations in which CNA's are helpful:

1. Hospital patients that require more one-on-one attention due to frequent trips to the bathroom, fall risk, and/or incontinence.
2. Chronically ill patients who need personal care assistance at home with bathing, toileting, and/or bed baths.
3. Patients who are recovering from a surgical procedure and require wound care and monitoring.

PCA - personal care attendant - a trained and certified health-care worker who assists patients by cleaning their homes, changing bed linens, helping patients to get out of bed, bathe, dress, groom, and eat. They do not measure vital signs.

An example of a situation where a personal care attendant would be helpful would be for a patient who has vision loss and requires assistance with bathing and toileting or someone with Parkinson's disease who is at risk for falls and needs assistance with showering.

May is Older Americans Month

May is Older Americans Month and as elder care professionals it is a great time to take a moment to pay tribute to older Americans and the seniors we serve. According to the Administration on Aging, Older Americans Month was established by Jimmy Carter in 1963 when interest in older Americans and their concerns was growing. It was a much different experience to be an older American in 1963. Medicare and Medicaid were not yet enacted, the Older Americans Act was not yet passed and seniors did not have access to the multitude of local support and services that exist today. There was no supplemental

security income, no senior nutrition programs, and no state agencies on aging, to name a few.

Each year the Administration on Aging chooses a theme for Older Americans Month. This year the theme is Connecting the Community - paying homage to the many ways in which older adults bring inspiration and continuity to the fabric of our communities. This theme is important because many stereotypes exist about seniors, one of which that seniors no longer contribute to society. As a professional in the field of elder care, I've met many seniors who volunteer

their time to help others, are parents to their grandchildren, and even continue to work well into their 80's. They are the proof that getting older does not always limit one's ability to participate in the community and contribute to society.

Happy May and Older Americans Month!

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