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NEEDS A NURSE

Nurse Tip of the Month September, 2018

Interview with Judith R. Sands, R.N. Author of Home Hospice Navigation: The Caregiver's Guide

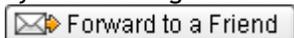
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EVENTS

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Greetings!

We are so happy to bring you an interview with Judith R. Sands, RN. She has written Home Hospice Navigation: The Caregiver's Guide. This book provides important information about the hospice process from an informed and caring point of view.

Q: What led you to write Home Hospice Navigation: The Caregiver's Guide?

JS: Despite extensive professional clinical knowledge and experiences, I faced challenges along the hospice caregiving journey. My mom often asked, "What do families do without a daughter with your knowledge and experience?" A driving force behind the book was her desire for all caregivers to have the information and support they need to have a positive home hospice experience.

Q: What do you see as the main benefits of using hospice services?

JS: The hospice benefit package is rich with support resources. Included is a team of Professional Support staff including at a minimum: physicians, nurse practitioners,

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nurses, dieticians, certified nursing assistants and clergy. Along with caregivers/family these become the circle-of-care and support for the loved one. These individuals are the experts in end-of-life care, helping to make the last phase of life comfortable and as full as possible. They are very familiar with how to manage symptoms and keep loved ones comfortable.

There are financial benefits included in the hospice benefit package, including medications and durable medical equipment (hospital bed, wheelchair, commode, over bed table) and personal care supplies that are associated with the admitting hospice diagnosis. For many families these medications and supplies are provided without an additional cost. This can be a significant cost saver and provide peace of mind. This is especially important to individuals who may be uninsured or under-insured.

Q: What are some common misconceptions about hospice?

JS: There are many misconceptions about hospice and often it is confused with euthanasia. Hospice is focused on symptom management and keeping individuals comfortable. Euthanasia is assisted suicide, the practice of intentionally ending a life to relieve pain and suffering. There is a very big difference between providing comfort and support to euthanasia. Hospice professionals are experts in helping your loved one live while dying.

Hospice is not a place to go and die. Hospice services can be provided in a variety of settings. Choosing hospice is not a death sentence, rather a service for comfort care and symptom management while still living.

Q: How does a patient qualify for hospice?

JS: Hospice services are available for a variety of diagnoses beyond cancer and AIDS, including: Congestive Heart Failure (CHF), end-stage

kidney disease, failure to thrive (calorie or protein malnutrition), Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's. There are medically accepted criteria for admission into hospice and individuals are evaluated and re-evaluated based on their medical condition. A caregiver can contact their physician or the hospice of their choice and request an evaluation to determine appropriateness for hospice services.

Q: How do you see hospice integrating with other parts of the health care system?

JS: Hospice care is an underutilized key piece of the healthcare system. Unfortunately, many people are uncomfortable or afraid to learn more about the supportive care available once curative measure are no longer successful. It is so important not to be blindsided by a crisis. It is critical to have information and resources available so that one does not feel they are the "deer in the headlights". It provides peace of mind having knowledge and understanding, not feeling pressured to make an uninformed critical decision. For those selecting the home hospice option, they often still need additional resources and support given that care is being delivered in a home setting.

Q: In addition to your book, what are some good resources for people curious about hospice or those who might want to consider including hospice care in their Advance Care Directives?

JS: Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End by Atul Gawande, MD
The PBS FrontLine link to Being Mortal interview with Dr. Gawande: [click here](#).

Q: How can I support a caregiver during this period of life?

JS: Caregivers are often very focused on the caregiving tasks that they may not be able to share what they need. Be specific in your offer of assistance; "I will bring you a meal on Tuesday",

"I will pick up your grocery list in the morning",
"I will cut your grass on Sunday". If you feel comfortable assisting with direct hands on care, let the caregiver know of that as well.

Thanks very much to Judith for this enlightening interview. To find out more about her book and purchase it, go to her site on Amazon.com.

We wish you a safe and healthy Fall!

P.S. Our business grows through referrals from friends, concerned loved ones, and dedicated health care professionals. Who is the next person you know who might benefit from care coordination from our registered nurses?

Sincerely,

**Jennifer & Diane
Everybody Needs A Nurse**