

Working with the Healthcare Team

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Overview

- The importance of teamwork
- Your role(s) as part of the healthcare team
- 4 Skills of Successful Caregivers

The Importance of Teamwork

- What is a team?
 - The person living with dementia, caregivers, medical providers, AND community service providers.
- There would be ***no team*** without caregivers and persons living with dementia.
- The team may determine what care is best, but the preferences of the person living with dementia must be the first priority.
- Communication works both ways.

Informing Caregivers

- Health care providers—general internists, geriatricians, family physicians, nurse practitioners, or physician assistants—inform caregivers about the diagnosis, management, treatment and alternative treatments.
- Community-based organization—like Area Agencies on Aging—link caregivers to services available for both the person living with dementia and for caregivers themselves.

Informing the Healthcare Team

You—the caregiver—should inform the healthcare team and community organizations about:

- The values of the person living with dementia
- Regular health-related updates and interactions with other healthcare providers
- The current health services the person living with dementia is receiving, and the services they may need from community-based organizations

Important Skills

Several skills will help you work well within the healthcare team.

- Be organized; make lists; take notes.
- Keep a watchful eye on any changes in behavior, or health of the person living with dementia.
- Persistently ask questions of the healthcare providers.
- Advocate for change if something is wrong, or you see room for improvement.

Skill 1: Organization

- Use a folder and/or computer for:
 - Continuously updating records
 - Tracking diagnoses, medications, and drug allergies
- To prepare for office visits:
 - Take notes/write down questions in advance.
 - Practice intended questions.
 - Send an e-mail to the healthcare provider.
 - Ask if you can record the visit on your cell phone.

Resources: Healthcare Provider Visits

- [Discussing Your Concerns with Your Doctor: A Worksheet](#) (National Institute of Health's National Institute on Aging)
- [Tips for Communicating with a Veteran's Health Care Team](#) (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs)

Skill 2: Watchfulness

As the caregiver, you know the person living with dementia best.

- Identify any changes in health and report them immediately.
- Your input is especially important when care is provided in a new setting.

Skill 3: Persistence

Ensuring the best care possible means:

- Actively joining decision-making
- Receiving health updates
- Getting information on risks and benefits
- Getting answers to questions
- [Dementia: What to Ask Your Doctor](#) (National Institute of Health's National Library of Medicine – Medline Plus)

Skill 4: Advocacy

In the best interest of the person living with dementia, you may need to choose a new healthcare provider.

- This is not easy.
- The clinic or other provider may enable a transfer.
- The right healthcare provider makes the caregiver's job easier.

Summary

Good teamwork means all team members:

- Participate in shared decision-making
- Are active members of the team
- Are proactive
- Ask questions and get answers
- Intervene when they see a problem