

NEWLY DIAGNOSED AND YOUNG?

Professional Care Management: What It Is, How It Can Help

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During the past twenty-five years a new specialty practice called "professional care management" has grown up all across the country. Here in Milwaukee, social workers Valerie Stefanich and I pioneered this specialty when we founded Stowell Associates in 1983. Valerie and I are social workers, but other care managers are trained as nurses, psychologists, and physical, occupational, or speech therapists. Care management crosses these professional boundaries in order to provide clients with a broad array of services:

- assessments that focus on the whole person in their particular situation;
- knowledge of the spectrum of services, programs, and devices that assist in maintaining independence; and
- a creative approach to arranging for the help that an individual needs, including finding alternative living arrangements, in-home caregivers, consumer education, and counseling.

How can a professional care manager help if you have Parkinson disease? For a newly diagnosed younger person, a care manager can assist in obtaining Social Security disability benefits if you can no longer work. The care manager can recommend cost-effective ways to manage if your income has been reduced. He or she can suggest where to go for an exercise program that research shows helps

maintain functioning. He or she can assist in finding meaningful ways to maintain connections in the community to avoid isolation and the emotional impact that a diagnosis of Parkinson disease can have on an individual and family. The care manager can recommend alternative ways to manage medication and reinforcement of the physician's orders, additionally providing help when a crisis occurs and when new resources or services are needed, including information on accessing publicly funded programs that pay for services. He or she can help the client to find a new place to live if that becomes necessary. Whatever the problem or challenge, a professional care manager can help you find a solution.

Care managers can be found locally and across the country through the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers (NAPGCM) website: www.caremanager.org. In most cases, a professional care manager's time and expertise are paid by clients by the hour, similar to hiring an attorney or accountant. If you seek professional care management, you may want to ask these questions:

- What is your training?
- How long have you been providing care management services?
- Do you provide any other services?
- Are you a member of NAPGCM?
- What are your fees?

Help is available – you do have options, and you can continue to live well with Parkinson disease.

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Example...
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Cherie Zaun
Shares Her Story

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WPA
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