



7 Mistakes

Family Caregivers
Make



mistake [mi-**steyk**] - to understand, interpret, or evaluate wrongly

Don't misunderstand us. We get it. Navigating the Australian health care delivery system is absolutely not for the faint-hearted.

We've talked and counselled countless families. They tell us of their utter frustration. They are simply trying to find the best solution for their parents' situation. And, they acknowledge, that there are many factors for their parents to consider - their care needs, their financial situation, their wishes, being realistic. Getting a grasp on that is difficult enough. But adult children grow to understand what their parents want; what their parents need; what their parents can afford.

Then they hit the research. And that is where things get complicated.




iNightingale is a service that is made up of registered nurses. We have cared for thousands and thousands of patients. Our role, no matter what clinical speciality we choose is simple - patient advocacy. We do this through a simple method.

Assess. Plan. Implement. Evaluate.

iNightingale has applied the nursing process to this particular group of patients - ageing seniors. Every person is different. Every situation is unique. But the role stays the same. We assess, plan, implement and evaluate so that we can advocate for the best outcome for your ageing parent.





Harm from errors can have a mild impact on your care recipient but it can also have a devastating impact. In Australia, 2-3% of all admissions to hospitals are related to medications. For Australia, that translates to 190,000 hospital admission per year. What is worse is that at least 50% of these are entirely preventable. The same statistics would apply to all OECD countries, including the UK, USA and Canada.

Consider the scenario where your aging parent has had a recent change in their health and it is likely that an introduction of a new medication is the prescribed therapy. So now you're struggling with the medications that stay the same, the medications that have been increased or decreased and the new medication that has been introduced. It's no wonder errors happen so easily.

Solution

Develop a medication list that keeps track of the medications that are currently being taken. It will help keep you clear on what tablets are for what condition and their frequency. This is also an essential document if you need to go to hospital unexpectedly.

MISTAKE 1

Despite taking extreme care,
a medication is given incorrectly

Solution

Go back to basics! Errors from incorrectly given medications are almost always relating to simple mistakes and not following the basic principles. Good practice and a good routine is critical.



Solution

Engaging your local pharmacy to dispense medications in a pre-prepared pack will ensure that all those medications are correctly organised for the right time without relying on a tired caregiver to work it out on the fly.

How iNightingale can help

Our Home Care Survival Guide teaches you all the tricks that nurses use every single day to make sure that the hundreds of medications that they give our every day to their patients are right. There are some basic and fundamental principles that we follow EVERY time that protects our patients and we reveal all of these to you so you can give medications without becoming part of the statistics.



Solution

Make sure that only one person is responsible for giving medications. Thinking that your sister has given this mornings pills while she's thinking you did it is a recipe for disaster





Your aging parent is incontinent and very dependant on the care provided by caregivers. Incontinence is a common problem and is particularly common for those elders who have this level of dependancy. More than 6 millions visits to the doctors are related to urinary tract infections (UTIs) in the US. Incontinence causes a constant urinary leakage which provides a warm and moist environment for bacterial growth. The warm, moist environment also creates an acidic area that lies against the skin, causing excoriation, redness, inflammation and discomfort.

UTIs develop quickly and can overwhelm an elderly person's immune system fast. Recognising the signs can be difficult, but prevention with good hygiene practices is essential.

Solution

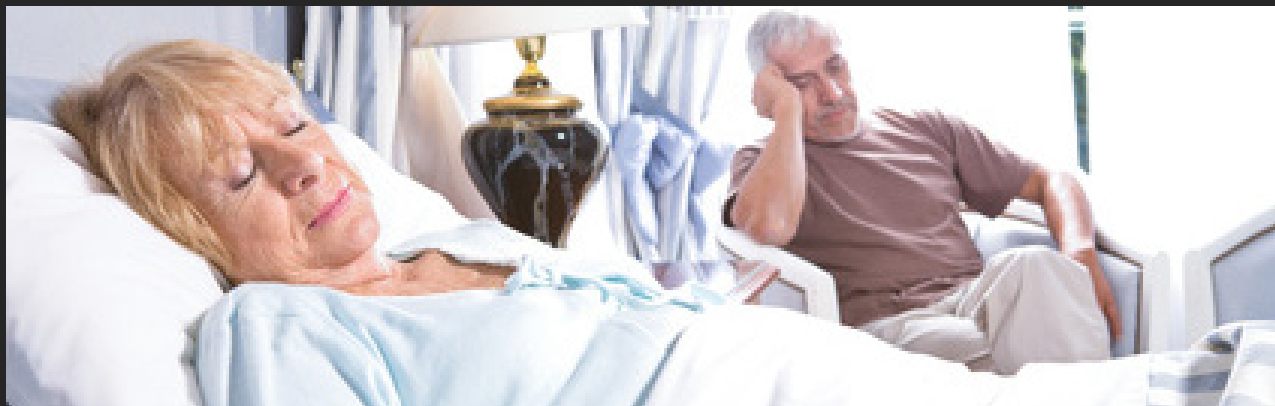
Regular hygiene through showering or bathing, depending on the person's dependancy is essential in keeping them clean and dry so as to not create an environment conducive to bacterial growth

MISTAKE 2

Poor hygiene practices when coping with incontinence

Solution

Get familiar with the signs and symptoms of a urinary tract infection so that you can intervene early for the best possible outcome if and when one develops.



Solution

Air! Incontinence pads are essential to maintain dignity and quality of life for a person with incontinence but it is equally important to provide some air time to allow the skin to dry

How iNightingale can help

Nurses are the masters of caring for people's basic needs of daily living whilst maintaining their dignity and quality of life. The Home Care Survival Guide gives you video instruction on how to achieve this at home. You will be skilled and confident in providing dignified care in what would otherwise have been awkward and embarrassing in no time.



Solution

If you're caring for someone who is faecally incontinent, particularly a woman then it is absolutely essential that you get your wipe direction right! Wipe from front to back to ensure you're going from clean to dirty, if you know what we mean.....





Healthcare professionals are trained annually to reduce the risks of caregiving, such as back injury or musculoskeletal injuries related to manual handling. Pushing. Pulling. Lifting. Twisting. All of these actions performed while load bearing when you are providing care ultimately ends in injury. The rate of injury amongst professional and family caregivers is high and the impact of that injury can lead to reduced mobility, pain, surgery as well as a range of psychological impacts such as depression. Research has also found that the greater the patient's dependency, the greater the risk to the caregiver.

When you, as the caregiver, do not know how to assess the ability of your aging parent to stand up or to walk, then they risk that they will fall is great. That fall poses a risk to them, but you are almost certainly going to attempt to break that fall. That's how injury happens.

Solution

Be disciplined! If your aging parent has no cognitive impairment, then set rules about how much load bearing you can manage from them. Discuss the risk that it poses and be disciplined about staying within those rules.

MISTAKE 3

Not being able to identify if your parent is safe to walk or stand

Solution

Understand the basics of manual handling
- use your knees to lift. Not your back.
The same applies when lifting anything
from a pot in the garden to rubbish into
the bin. Knees. Not back!



Solution

Dont' be a martyr! Acknowledge that your
safety and wellbeing is as important as
your aging parent's. Consider the con-
sequences if you were out of action for
several weeks due to a bad back.

How iNightingale can help

The message is simple: if you have the skills, you reduce your risk of injury dra-
matically. For a long time now, hospitals have implemented a No-Lift policy. You
will be masters of a range of techniques that ensures the need for lifting is elimi-
nated and replaced by other options. You will soon be a family caregiver who is
working smarter, not harder!



Solution

Research what devices are available to
help you take the load off! There are
many devices that hospitals use to bear
loads rather than humans. Investigate
what you can hire for your needs.





Falls pose a terrible danger to the elderly. Falls often require hospitalisation. They often result in injuries to hips and knees. As one ages, they are harder to recover from. In Australia, an estimated 83,800 falls in our elderly population resulted in hospitalisation. They spent an average of 15.5 days in hospital after that fall. It took a recovery time of six months before they return to their pre-fall functioning.

If there was something to make sure you avoid, this is it.

Understanding what factors increase your aging parent's risk is absolutely essential. Their own physical and health status is clearly a factor but their environment is also a critical factors in posing a risk of them sustaining a fall.

Solution

Talk to close family or friends who haven't seen your parent in a while. Ask them if they were surprised by how your parent was compared to the last time that they saw them. Ask them what has changed in them.

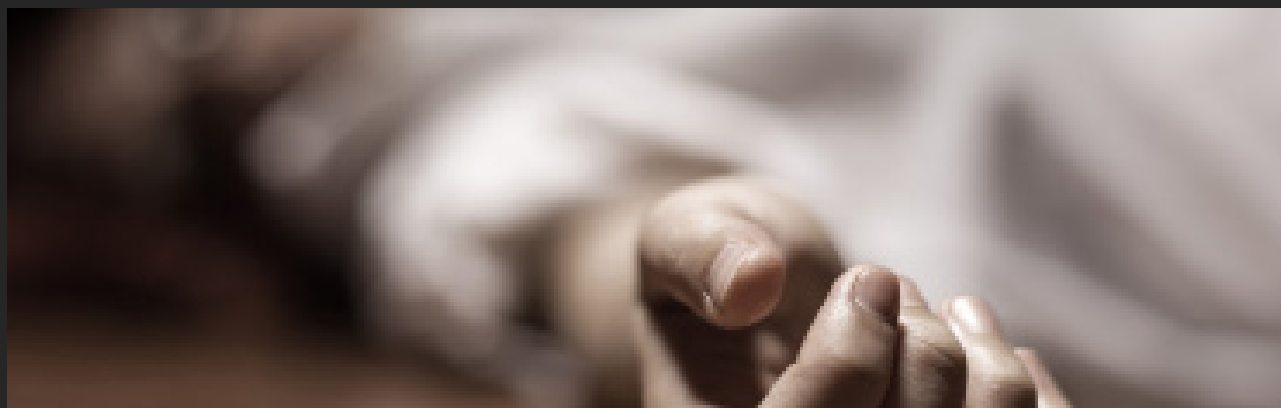
MISTAKE 4

Not recognising the falls risk present in your aging parents own homes



Solution

Read up on what are the greatest risks that face ageing seniors. Find out more about the greatest challenges such as falls and nutrition risk and take an objective view of your parent's situation.



Solution

Take a look at some photos of them from five and ten years ago and consider what their physical capacity was then compared to now. Has there been a dramatic change?

How iNightingale can help

The Home Care Survival Guide gives you confidence and competence to look at your parent's environment with a critical and trained eye. You'll identify hazards that you had never even seen before. You will implement solutions that will keep them safe and stop you worrying that the phone will ring with news of a fall



Solution

Talk to your parent and ask them "Really: how are you coping?" They may be very concerned about how their coping but are reluctant to verbalise it or burden you. This may be very revealing.





Any person with a chronic disease, and aging isn't too dissimilar from any other chronic disease, it is likely that there will be good days and bad days. Some times, a bad day will be more fatigue than usual, more confused than usual, poorer mobility than usual. Other times, the bad days might be a fall, or a raging infection or a change in their condition that you've not seen before, but you're worried. More often than not, early medical intervention is the irrefutable key to success. Getting your parent back home and comfortable is the priority, not in hospital and out of their usual environment. But often, when caregivers see changes, they wait. They wait for improvement. They wait for a sure sign that it is deterioration and not just a passing thing. They don't want to be judged by health professionals for "wasting their time". When the decision comes to go, caregivers are not ready.

Solution

Accept now that it will happen. Accept, also, that it is not a sign of failure. It is not a sign that you, as their carer, are not coping. Make it part of your framework of care that doctor visits are part of early intervention

MISTAKE 5

You are not ready for the inevitable unexpected trip to the doctor or ER

Solution

Prepare a list of early signs and symptoms that are specific to your parent's chronic conditions so you know when to act with confidence and not second-guessing "Should I go...Should I stay...."



Solution

Have a list of numbers to call. The old fridge magnet with emergency numbers is might be "low-tech" but it works.

How iNightingale can help

The Home Care Survival Guide teaches you what clinical deterioration looks like. Like with most things in life, it comes down to a few basic principles. When you are familiar with these principles, you will know when to call for medical help, stop the second-guessing and not worry for one second that the health professionals' time will be wasted.



Solution

Make sure that all those who are helping you with some of the caregiving are aware of what to look out for and when to call for help.





Pressure injuries. Sounds technical. But they are the age-old problem of bed sores. Research has found that somewhere between 5% & 26% of patients being cared for in health facilities are found to have pressure injuries. This is happening inside health care facilities with nursing staff and aides who are trained to manage and prevent bed sores. Worse, they have a range of technologies and devices to prevent them for high risk patients. When you are a family caregiver, there's no instruction manual. There's no way to possibly know that very simple tasks that you perform, like bed making may be contributing to the risk of developing bed sores. Understanding whether your aging parent is at risk of developing a bed sore is impossible to know until after it has happened. Once there, they are difficult to correct. Certainly, if a person has an underlying condition like diabetes, then the consequences of a bed sore can be dramatic.

Solution

MISTAKE 6

You are unaware of the dangers posed by pressure injuries

Solution



Solution

How iNightingale can help

You will be able to prevent a pressure injury developing in your care recipient after completing the Home Care Survival Guide. You will know the risk factors and how they relate to your care recipient. All the basic principles you need to follow will be understood. Prevention is one thing, but if one develops, you can manage it and reverse it's progression from the outset.



Solution





You are a part of “The Sandwich Generation”. A group of adult children who find themselves “sandwiched” between raising children and bearing the responsibility for being the caregivers of their aging parents. You are still working full or part time. You feel that it is your responsibility to sort all your parent’s needs. You take on tasks relating to their mobility, communication, health care, reading and writing tasks, transport needs, household chores, property maintenance, meal preparation and self-care needs. You will take an average of 6.6 sick days from work to juggle all of these tasks. One third of you will reduce your hours at work or resign altogether. You let your leisure activities go and reduce the time you allow for physical exercise. After some time, you start to feel burdened, guilt, frustration, social isolation and negatively towards your perception of lack of choice about your caregiving role you find yourself with.

Solution

Research confirms a risk of poorer health and long term caregiving responsibility. So get back on the horse, even if it is for your parent’s sake! Book yourself a massage today. Or back into the golf lessons you dropped. Or call the book club that you let go.

MISTAKE 7

As the primary caregiver, you have given up all your leisure activities

Solution

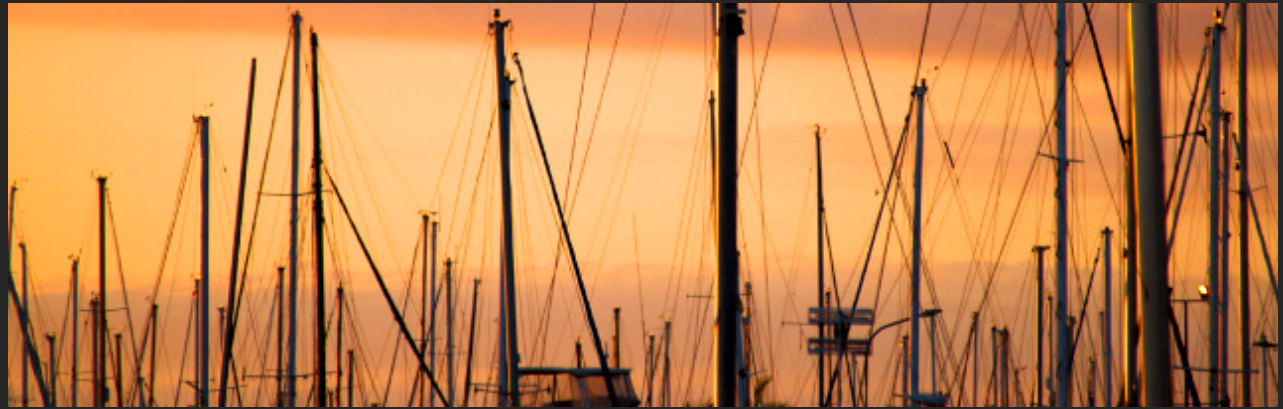
Start that hour walk again today, too. Or the jogging. Because the same applies with poor health with caregiving responsibilities. Plus, if you're too unwell to look after your parents, who is going to?

Solution

Get some help. It doesn't have to come down to you alone to sort your ageing parents. Engage friends, family and neighbours to take on some of the tasks.

Solution

Review your time management strategies. Running around with multiple doctor's appointments across five different days is an easy mistake to make but is a real time-drainer.



How iNightingale can help

One of the best advantages of completing the Home Care Survival Guide is that you will be working smarter, not harder. That will help save your back and fatigue levels. It will also ensure that you are able to execute your care tasks in the most efficient, safe manner possible. You'll be back to golf in no time - this time, guilt-free!



WHO We Are

Nicole Nash-Arnold

Nicole Nash-Arnold is a Registered Nurse. She has been nursing for twenty years. She has nursed thousands of patients, mainly in the operating theatre. Nicole has worked in both public and private hospitals in Queensland. Ten years ago, she left the “coal face” of nursing and moved into a Nurse Educator role and then a series of senior and executive hospital administration roles. Nic has always believed in the empowerment with education. That might be empowering nurses to provide better care or patients to take better care, but education is always the centre of the solution.

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“My first love in nursing was the operating theatre. It will always be ‘my home’. It was always humbling to me that patients gave me their complete trust. They would come into my operating theatre, let my team put them under an anaesthetic and have total confidence that we would look after them. That, to me, is what nursing is all about: we call it patient advocacy. But really, it’s just saying “we’ve got you”. I continue that with iNightingale. You’ve got this problem with your ageing parents - give it us. We’ll sort it.”



Phill Tsingos

Registered Nurse | Director



Phill Tsingos is a Registered Nurse. He has been a nurse his entire adult life (Circa: 1993). Phill has worked all over Australia and overseas in the UK. He has worked in hospitals, community nursing and in Aboriginal health. He has worked in both public and private sectors in both adults and children nursing. Now, he thrives on the daily challenges of working in an emergency department. Phill's mission is everyone should have the best quality of life possible. He has made caring for people a life long devotion (perhaps even an obsession). Seeing many people suffer as a result of inadequate care at home, Phill wanted to be the prevention not the cure. That is how iNightingale was born.

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"I truly love nursing. I love understanding what makes this human body tick and what I can do as a nurse to protect it. My time in intensive care nursing has provided me an incredible knowledge base. But most of all I love patients. I love chatting and finding out about their lives. Offer me a cup of tea and a biscuit and you'll have me chatting with you for hours. That's how I help people."

Buy Now



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