



Nurse to Nurse

Oregon's Community Based Care Nursing Newsletter

Preparing for disasters

There has been worldwide attention on emergency preparedness due to many catastrophic events over the last several years. However, the need to be prepared isn't limited to catastrophic events. Last winter some areas of Oregon were without electricity for several days to a week. Being prepared for inconveniences at home or other events that may prevent you from going home can make a big difference and can save your life. We hope this article assists you in becoming prepared for any emergency.



The first step is to work with the individual, family members and/or the guardian to help them to think through the individual's limitations and how they would impact their survival strategy. You can help them develop a simple plan and then walk through it every now and then so everyone remembers it. You can bring outside resources such as Red Cross brochures and checklists to the table to assist with those preparations and you can shepherd the preparedness process.

Continued on page 2

Practical steps you can take to help the in-home client prepare for disasters

The world was shocked to see how many Katrina and Rita hurricane victims were elderly, or individuals with disabilities and their caregivers. We don't want that to happen in Oregon. There are many practical steps that can be taken before a disaster strikes to lessen the impact of the event on vulnerable people.

What practical steps can you do, as a nurse, to assist your client who lives at home with intermittent or non-existent support system? What if the client's family caregiver is frail or disabled him- or herself?

In this issue

Preparing for disaster	1
Living well with chronic conditions	4
New Web site for seniors	7
Pain management trainings in 2007	7

As a team, you can assist with the development of a plan for the individual and the family caregiver, which includes:

- **Consideration of sensory or cognitive impairments** that affect the receiving and processing of instructions before and during an event. Write these on the Emergency Health Information Card.
- **A plan to evacuate from the client's home**, considering mobility impairments. Prepare an emergency evacuation bag to go, which would include basic care items such as incontinence supplies, hearing aid batteries, personal hygiene items, 2-3 changes of clothing and, if possible, a 3-5 day supply of meds in case the disaster happens near the refill date. The bag should also include lists of items that should be packed at the last moment, including adaptive equipment, special medical supplies (e.g. diabetes supplies), the client's normal supply of prescription drugs and a copy of the prescriptions, if possible. Place the lists in zip lock plastic bags in the emergency evacuation bag so they can be filled at the last moment. Include an updated copy of the individual's Emergency Health Information Card.
- **Plan an evacuation location** with a distant family member or friend, if transportation permits. In most emergencies in Oregon, an individual with care needs would not be evacuated to a regular emergency shelter. In small-scale emergencies, Red Cross may place individuals and their caregivers in hotels if no other options are available.



If a person enters a shelter, it would still be beneficial for the individual to be accompanied by someone familiar with their care needs. If the individual you care for is extremely impaired, the most appropriate evacuation site may be a nursing facility or hospital.

- **A plan to shelter in place.** There are many sources of information about preparing a 72-hour kit and other survival techniques; but for your client, the plan should include special considerations regarding his condition. For example, would it be prudent to have on-hand an alternate source of power for critical equipment, or to fill a chest with ice for life-dependent meds? Ask all the “what if” questions ahead of time. If the client's financial situation precludes the best solution, what are reasonable alternatives?
- **Completion of multiple copies of the client's health information.** Put one copy in the individual's wallet, one on the refrigerator for rescuers, one in the emergency evacuation bag and give one to a family member, direct care worker or a buddy.
- **Arrangements for one or more buddies to check on the individual in the event of a disaster.** A plan to “Get a buddy, — Be a buddy,” also gives the client responsibility for checking in on a neighbor, grandchild or friend. They could exchange emergency phone numbers, keys, emergency plans and additional support. A DVD of the *Get a Buddy-Be a Buddy* program is available by calling Seniors and Disability

Services of Rogue Valley Council of Governments at 541-664-6674. The DVD is \$10 plus \$4 for shipping and handling.”

- **A plan for pets or service animals.** Pets cannot go to a shelter, so arrangements should be made with family members, a kennel or a veterinarian to take them if the disaster looks as though it could be prolonged. Both pets and service animals should have ID tags. Plan to take food, dishes and other essentials for service animals. Include these items on the lists in the emergency evacuation bag. Information on pet evacuation is available from Red Cross and FEMA.
- **Supply of prescription drugs** and other medically necessary supplies, such as incontinence supplies, and other specific medical supplies that pertain to the individual’s condition, including oxygen or catheters. Nurses can help individuals by making sure they don’t wait too long to refill the meds, talk to their pharmacy about its emergency plans and make sure that the client has other non-medication supplies on hand to meet the needs in the event of an emergency.
- **Registration of the vulnerable individual with certain local entities** so they are aware of the client’s special need for assistance and lack of a regular support system. Some fire departments keep local registries. In some areas there are community disaster registries. Durable medical equipment providers may check in on their customers during a disaster, as might many social service agencies where your client receives services.

For a nurse, disaster preparedness is likely to extend beyond concerns for your regular clients. To help others you must be able to help yourself first. You may wish to prepare your own first aid kit and emergency meds and supplies kit to keep in your car. The links below contain suggested items that should be included in your emergency kits. Don’t forget to keep an adequate supply of gloves, masks and, depending on the work you do, disposable gowns and shoe covers.

Useful links:

Preparedness materials for individuals and families:

www.ready.gov/america/getakit/seniors.html

www.dhs.gov/xcitizens/citizens/editorial_0711.shtm

www.redcross.org

Other resources for nurses:

Home Health Nurse Journal
homehealthcarenurseonline.com/

National Family Caregiver Association
www.nfcacares.org/index.cfm

Resources for nurses:

www.resourcenurse.com/reference.html

Listserves:

HCARENURS – Homecare Nursing listserv. To join, send an email to: listserv@listserv.medec.com with the message: Subscribe HCARENURS
Firstname Lastname

Living well with chronic conditions

The Living Well with Chronic Conditions Program is a workshop given two and a half hours, once a week, for six weeks, in community settings such as senior centers, churches, libraries and hospitals. People with different chronic health problems attend together. Workshops are facilitated by two trained leaders, one or both of whom are non-health professionals with a chronic disease themselves.

The workshop subjects covered include:

- 1) techniques to deal with problems such as frustration, fatigue, pain and isolation,
- 2) appropriate exercise for maintaining and improving strength, flexibility, and endurance,
- 3) appropriate use of medications,
- 4) communicating effectively with family, friends, and health professionals,
- 5) nutrition, and
- 6) how to evaluate new treatments.

The Living Well class will not conflict with existing programs or treatments. It is designed to enhance regular treatment and disease specific education such as Better Breathers, cardiac rehabilitation, or diabetes instruction. In addition, many people have more than one chronic condition. The class is especially helpful for these people, as it gives them the skills to



coordinate all the things needed to manage their health, as well as to help them keep active in their lives.

Many organizations in Oregon support the Living Well program. For more information, call Laura Saddler or Jennifer Mead at (971) 673-0984, email living.well@state.or.us or visit the Web site at www.healthoregon.org/livingwell.

*** Attention first time readers***

Nurse to Nurse: Oregon's Community Based Care Nursing Newsletter

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Pain management trainings in 2007

Due to the success of the pain management trainings conducted in 2006, SPD will be providing another round of these trainings to help nurses meet the new relicensure requirements. The focus of these trainings will be on chronic, non-malignant pain in the senior population and for people with disabilities.

The dates for the upcoming trainings are:

- May 15 Bandon Public Library
- June 19 Treasure Valley Community College in Ontario

July 10 Shilo Inn Oceanfront in Seaside

August 14 Shilo Inn Klamath Falls

The cost for this training is \$30.00. Remember to sign up early, as class size is limited. Registration fliers will be mailed out to mailing list subscribers.

If you have any questions, or would like to request a registration form, please contact Bernadette Murphy at 503-945-5839 or Bernadette.J.Murphy@state.or.us.

New Web site for seniors

A new Web site devoted to seniors and people with disabilities was launched last year called the Network of Care. Network of Care is a comprehensive, Internet based community resource for the elderly and people with disabilities, including their caregivers and service providers. This easy-to-use Web site provides an extensive directory to put people in touch with the right services at the right time.

The Web site also offers vital information about assistive devices, caregiving, day-to-day challenges and diseases, as well as daily news from around the world concerning aging and disabilities. This unique, one stop information tool enables you to keep personal records, create an online family meeting place, and communicate directly



with elected officials to make your voice heard in the legislative halls.

The Network of Care is a cooperative project of the Oregon Association of Area Agencies on Aging and Disabilities (04AD) and the Department of Human Services. For more information please check out their Web site at www.oregon.networkofcare.org.

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Assisting seniors and people with disabilities of all ages to achieve individual well-being through opportunities for community living, employment and services that promote choice, independence and dignity.

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