Preparation Brings Peace of Mind for Caregivers

On February 1, 2010, Mary Leigh Blek and her husband were on a cruise off the coast of Argentina when she got the call that her dad’s wife, Madge, had died and her dad was in the hospital with a severe eye injury. Her dad had fallen when running to get help for Madge. Blek and her husband cut their trip short and flew home to be with her dad. Once her dad was released from the hospital, he asked to live with Blek and her husband. They fixed up the guest room, and made modifications in the bathroom such as bars in the shower so that Dad would be comfortable and safe.

Blek’s goal has been to help her dad feel settled and secure for the family’s peace of mind. She has spent the past year helping her dad get established in his new home and setting up an organized system of care so that he will feel safe. In the spring of 2010, she transferred her dad’s medical care to UC Irvine’s SeniorHealth Center, under Dr. Laura Mosqueda’s direction. Blek found a caregiver to help at home when she is out, and located a skilled nursing facility that could provide respite care, if necessary. She learned a big lesson while she was out of the country: she needed to organize her dad’s medical records and contact information. She started a folder with a list of all his healthcare providers, his medications, medical history, diagnoses and emergency contacts. Her entire family has been proactive about completing advanced directives as well. The fact that her dad is a retired physician, her husband is an attorney and Blek is a retired nurse, gave them the background to understand the importance of having advanced directives as well as complete medical information on hand.

“It gives the family peace of mind and ultimately I hope it gives my dad a sense of security. He looks to me to be sure he’s safe.”

– MARY LEIGH BLEK

IMPACT: A new treatment program for depression in older adults

UC Irvine SeniorHealth Center has just started offering a program called Improving Mood-Promoting Access to Collaborative Treatment (IMPACT), which treats depression in older adults. With IMPACT, the patient, his or her physician and a depression care manager work together to design an individualized plan of care based on each patient’s unique needs. Participants will be enrolled in a research study to measure the effectiveness of IMPACT. For more information, call 714.456.7007 and ask for the IMPACT program.

UC Irvine Department of Family Medicine announces a new treatment program for depression in older adults using a model called IMPACT. IMPACT provides treatment in a primary care medical setting using a stepped level of care that varies depending on your needs and interests. You and your physician, working with a Depression Care Manager, will design a plan that works best for you. Participants will be enrolled in a research study to measure the effectiveness of the IMPACT program in addition to receiving treatment for depression. Call 714.456.7007 and ask for IMPACT program.

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“WE SEE A WORLD WITHOUT ELDER ABUSE.”
World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is June 15
Letter from the Director

In this issue of our newsletter you will see highlights from the debut of our John B. Parker series on Successful Aging. You’ll also hear from Mary Leigh Blek, caregiver for her dad, who has taken extra steps to prepare for emergencies, so that her dad and family have some much needed peace of mind. You will also meet our new SeniorHealth Center manager and hear about employer matching gifts for those of you who would like to support our work.

I also want to make sure you’re aware of a very special program at the SeniorHealth Center, the Health Assessment Program for Seniors (HAPS). This program provides an in-depth consultation for patients with complex needs. At UC Irvine, we believe that older adults with complex medical, psychological and social challenges need the help of a team of healthcare professionals in order to achieve the most comprehensive care plan possible. These healthcare professionals are specially trained in caring for the complex issues experienced by older adults with multiple health issues. The team includes a physician who specializes in care for older adults (geriatrician), a psychologist, physician assistant, geriatric pharmacist, occupational therapist and social worker.

By working together, this highly experienced team addresses the underlying issues that simply cannot be addressed in a standard office visit. Patients receive a consultation from the HAPS team, which then develops a comprehensive care plan based on the visit. A few weeks later, the patient returns with his or her family for a discussion about the HAPS team’s recommended plan of care. Because of the comprehensive nature of the consultation and inclusion of the family in the discussions, many patients and their families have said this experience is life-changing. Through HAPS, our goal is to help older adults live more productive, healthy lives and to help families negotiate the difficult tasks of providing for care.

What most people don’t know about HAPS is that we rely on our donors to make this program possible. Many of the services are not reimbursed by Medicare or other insurers; we provide this care because it is the right thing to do for older adults with complex, chronic conditions.

At UC Irvine’s Program in Geriatrics, we believe in a compassionate, comprehensive approach to healthy aging. We live this passion every day. HAPS has a unique, essential place in helping older adults live more productive and healthier lives while we help families negotiate the difficult tasks of providing for care.

– Laura Mosqueda, MD
Director, UC Irvine Program of Geriatrics

Peace of Mind Continued from page 1

Blek reports that her dad is happy and healthy at age 91. He walks every day and works hard at staying healthy. “It gives the family peace of mind and ultimately I hope it gives my dad a sense of security. He looks to me to be sure he’s safe.” Blek has been so successful at lining up medical care, respite care, in-home caregiving support and organizing her dad’s medical records that for the first time since her dad’s fall, she and her husband are planning an international trip. Blek says, “I do this for my dad but also so I don’t have to worry. I’ve learned from my dad that life is finite. Being organized and thorough about my dad’s care also allows me to enjoy my life, especially when I’m traveling.”

“I do this for my dad but also so I don’t have to worry. I’ve learned from my dad that life is finite.”

– MARY LEIGH BLEK

Leverage Your Impact

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John B. Parker Successful Aging Series

On January 31, 2012, Dr. Mark Lachs, geriatrician, Cornell Weill Medical College, spoke about current research related to successful aging to a standing-room-only audience. Stay posted for announcements about the next presentation in this series.

Here are some photo highlights from the event...

Dr. Mark Lachs

Dr. Mark Lachs with Dr. Laura Mosqueda, MD, director, UC Irvine Geriatrics (right), and Kerry Burnight, PhD, UC Irvine gerontologist (left)

Dr. Mark Lachs

Dean, School of Medicine, Ralph Clayman, MD

Aileen Wiglesworth, PhD, UC Irvine, elder abuse researcher

Dr. Laura Mosqueda, MD, director, UC Irvine Geriatrics

Steven Tam, MD, UC Irvine geriatrician
Meet Drucie Dupree, RN

Drucie Dupree, RN, is the new manager of the SeniorHealth Center. Dupree comes from a surgery background and chose to work in senior health because of her experience as caregiver for her mom. Dupree’s mom experienced short-term memory loss due to a tumor on her brain stem. “It’s tough being a caregiver. I’ve been there. I want to give back.” Dupree has two children and seven grandchildren and lives in Mission Viejo. Welcome to the team, Drucie!

“It’s tough being a caregiver. I’ve been there. I want to give back.”
– DRUCIE DUPREE, RN

Inside:
• One caregiver’s approach to finding peace of mind
• Photos from the John B. Parker Series
• New treatment program makes an IMPACT on depression
• And more!