New Computer Technology Spells “High-Touch, High-Tech” Nursing at Care Corp

Gone are the days when the doctor needed only a little black bag to hold all the tools necessary for a home care visit. Care Corporation, Geauga County’s full-service home health care provider, recently placed state-of-the-art computer technology into the hands of their nurses with the purchase of 12 laptop computers.

What will this mean for patients? According to Elizabeth Petersen, RN, Vice President of Operations at Care Corp, “This new computer technology improves the quality of information available to our nurses, therapists, and other professional clinicians. While Care Corp’s hands-on, quality care is not affected, Care Corp is beefing up the quality of information immediately available to its staff. Care Corp’s nurses will now have access to up-to-the-minute information on each patient – which is particularly useful to the on-call nurse who needs the latest information to identify changes in a patient’s condition during an emergency night call.”

“I think everyone recognizes that it’s the wave of the future – the electronic management of information,” Petersen adds. “If you’re going to keep up in the health care field and provide the best possible care to your patients, you need this type of technology.” Prior to joining Care Corporation 21 years ago, Petersen worked (on and off for 25 years) as a nurse in critical care and the emergency room at Geauga Hospital, while raising her two sons.

So perhaps “high-touch, high-tech” best describes Care Corporation’s transition into the future. Jason Baker, Vice President of Finance and Marketing, credits Petersen for suggesting the move toward electronic information management. “Liz recognized our old computer system had serious drawbacks. We discussed this and knew there must be an easier way for our nurses to do their documentation.” Baker immediately started researching.

“…”If you’re going to keep up in the health care field and provide the best possible care to your patients, you need this type of technology.”
Many senior citizens are walking a tightrope. They’re getting along fine at home, but an unfortunate event, such as a fall, threatens to be a life-changing incident. That’s where occupational therapy comes in.

Occupational therapy concerns “everything people do to maintain independence in life: feeding, grooming, dressing, bathing, meal preparation, mobility around the home,” explains Jane Bolden, occupational therapist at Care Corp. “We try to foresee trouble.”

For many people, a fall is the cause of decline, of losing independence. Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths and the most common cause of hospitalization related to trauma.

In 2001, almost 400 thousand people were hospitalized following falls, Bolden, cites statistics from the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Statistics also suggest that folks 75 years of age and older who fall are four to five times more likely to move into a long-term care facility.

Occupational therapists work to change statistics like these by providing treatment to be safe and function in the home to remain as independent as possible for as long as possible. To prepare for the job, occupational therapists are required to have at least a bachelor’s degree, which includes a minimum of six months of internships, a certification exam and licensure by the state of Ohio.

“As an occupational therapist going into the home, I’m looking at the whole picture,” Bolden says, who earned her degree in occupational therapy at Ohio State University. An OT takes into account a patient’s mental and physical condition, assistance that is available to the person, the environment, and so on.

“I go room by room and through my patients’ daily routines to see if they can get out of bed and into their clothing, use the bathroom and the kitchen,” she says. This is an excellent way to understand and alleviate the challenges a person is facing. For example, a patient who may have done well with a walker in the hospital - where hallways are wide, open and smooth - may find difficulty at home, where walkways can be narrow and cluttered.

Very few homes are as accommodating as a rehabilitation clinic. Making the transition to home easier and safe are Bolden’s main concerns.

There are many ways to achieve these goals. Walkers and wheelchairs are demanding on the upper body, so patients often need to work on upper body strength and coordination through a simple home-exercise program. Changes to surroundings also help.

“We can modify the environment to keep people as functional as possible for as long as possible. It can be as simple as rearranging things and clearing areas or as complex as putting in ramps, grab bars or a modified bathroom. A well-placed grab bar can save a person a lot of suffering and thousands of dollars in medical expenses,” Bolden insists.

One of the most complicated tasks is making meals. Bolden recommends many patients avoid using the stove and make good use of a microwave, placed on the table so there’s no need to carry a plate of hot food.

Another way to make life easier for those whose balance is compromised is to keep shoes on a chair so there’s no need to bend over a walker. Try to keep commonly needed items in the “triangle of efficiency,” the area between your elbows and your nose. Another tip is to try to live on a single level — for example, move the laundry room upstairs. Also be sure to get some expert advice on what kind of equipment

“I tell people it’s my job to worry about you.”
would be useful, such as grab bars, toilet railings and tub benches.

“OT is not a fix-all for everybody, but often it makes life more bearable and takes some stress out of the situation,” Bolden says. “Most caregivers want to keep their loved ones home if they can find the wherewithal to do it.”

But, it can be tough, especially for the thousands of caregivers looking after loved ones with dementia, explains Bolden, who has a particular interest in working with that group.

More than four million adults in the United States have dementia. As baby boomers age, this number is expected to skyrocket to 13 million.

“OT really helps the caregivers of Alzheimer patients. If you can keep somebody home for a longer period of time, their quality of life is so much better,” Bolden says.

Care Corp.’s staff of 40 Home Health Aides is specially trained to watch for any decline in a patient, adds Debbie Jewell, Home Health Aide Coordinator at Care Corp. Aides receive safety training annually and attend in-services, one of which is about safety and bath outcomes.

“We train them to observe the patient for safety and report when they feel a patient is in an unsafe situation,” she explains.

“Oftentimes, a Care Corp Home Health Aide is the first person to notice a change, so we rely on them to report that so we can get a therapist in.”

That puts Care Corp’s occupational therapist and Home Health Aides on a joint mission. “I tell people it’s my job to worry about you,” Bolden concludes.

A well-placed grab bar can save a person a lot of suffering and thousands of dollars in medical expenses.

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MAKING HOME SAFER FOR OLDER ADULTS

An “ounce of prevention” can go a long way toward preventing falls:

- Remove throw rugs.
- Use only non-skid, rubber-backed bathmats.
- Apply non-skid strips or decals to floor of tub and shower.
- Eliminate thresholds or strips between different flooring materials wherever possible, or clearly mark thresholds with brightly colored tape.
- Remove low-profile furniture such as stools and coffee tables from traffic areas.
- Install rails on both sides of stairs.
- Railings in the hallway between bedroom and bathroom can be very helpful for nighttime use.
- Use grab bars and bathroom safety equipment as recommended by therapist.
- Conveniently placed sturdy chairs allow older people to sit and take a brief rest when standing at bathroom or kitchen sink. Captain-style chairs with arms work best.
- Easy chairs should have sturdy arms, provide soft but firm support, keep thighs parallel to floor, and allow feet to rest flat on floor. A chair that is too soft or too low can be a hazard when trying to move from sit to stand. Seating can be adjusted by adding another cushion as needed, as well as adding a board underneath to provide a more solid base.
- Consider putting bells or some sort of “noisemaker” on pets who tend to be underfoot.

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Loved-Ones Remembered at Holiday Helps Workshop & Memorial Service

Join with others as they remember loved-ones who have passed away by attending the annual Holiday Helps and Memorial Service from noon to 2 p.m. on Saturday, November 12, at Care Corporation, 831 South Street (Rt. 44) in Chardon. Hospice of Care Corp and Burr Funeral Home sponsor this event.

The Holiday Helps program offers tools to help individuals who have experienced a recent death of a friend or family member cope with their grief during the upcoming holidays. Following this program is a Memorial Service. During this time, those in attendance may share personal memories. The event concludes with a candle-lighting ceremony and address by Reverend Ray Mullet.

For more information contact Care Corp at (440) 338-6628, (440) 286-2273, or (440) 632-5991.
CEO’s MESSAGE

FY2005 was an excellent year for Parkside Care Corporation II. We provided over 70,000 hours of home health services, to just under 1000 clients, utilizing the skills of over 100 employees and volunteers.

We continued to learn through our upgraded computer system and government reports that our client outcomes are exceptionally good. We also know that our clients are older, sicker, get more visits, and receive home care longer than most home care recipients throughout the United States. Our clients also do better than the general home health population.

Once again, the Care Corp staff and the many wonderful physicians of this community worked well together to meet the needs of Geauga Counties seniors.

As we celebrate our 21st year in business, I am so proud that Care Corp continues to be the home care provider of choice for the residents of Geauga County.

To the Care Corp staff – Thank you for all the wonderful things you do for our many needy clients.

To the physicians of this community – Thank you for your unending support.

To the residents of Geauga County – Thank you for allowing us the privilege to serve you.

Serving you is truly a labor of love.

Sincerely,

Shirley A. Baker, Pres/CEO

Jason Baker, Vice President of Finance & Marketing

Mission Statement:
To assure the availability of a full range of quality home health care services to Geauga County residents.

HUMAN RESOURCES

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Shirley A. Baker, RN, BSN, CHCE

VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS
Elizabeth Petersen, RN

QM COORDINATOR
Diana Guseilo, RN

VICE PRESIDENT OF FINANCE & MARKETING
Jason Baker

MANAGER OF SKILLED SERVICES
Marty Takacs, RN

OFFICE MANAGER
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Medical Advisor: Robert Evans, D.O.

MEMBERS
Marc Burr          Jean Kelleher
Rev. Robert Penrod  Diana Guseilo
Barbara Meagher     Pastor Ray Mullet
William Rowley     Jake Schoeppler
                    Tony Gall
Care Corp purchased Misys, one of the top software programs in the country, in 2003 and started implementing the new software in the back office – accounting, billing, etc. Baker says the software offers superior accounting packages, but the real impetus for this purchase was that software was designed by nurses for nurses.

Petersen says, “We talked to the nurses over the past two years to let them know the transition to laptop computers was coming. I welcomed the challenge to computerize operations. I love doing something new and different, and I loved the opportunity to teach our staff. It’s good to keep learning.”

“Laptop computers will provide Care Corp’s nurses with immediate access to a patient’s entire medical record during a house call,” Jason Baker, the son of Shirley Baker, RN, founder and CEO of Care Corp, explains. “While in a patient’s home, our nurses can enter information about his or her condition and treatments, eliminating the need to rewrite it into patient charts at the office. This provides several benefits: reduced paperwork; strengthened security of patient information; and improved ease in submitting information electronically, as required by the state.”

“A nurse’s job revolves around knowledge, and this tool will give Care Corp’s nurses more timely and accurate information,” Baker adds. “Care Corp made the decision to spend the money knowing that one night in the future the on-call nurse will have the information needed to make a life-saving decision because up-to-date information was available at her fingertips.”

And how has Care Corp’s nursing staff responded to this change – particularly those with more than 25 years of nursing experience but who have never even touched a computer?

“Unbelievable. Cooperative. Optimistic. They have all responded positively,” Petersen exclaims, proudly. “I would not trade our staff for any other. It’s been a tremendous amount of work and required a big commitment on their part. We’re working days, evenings, and weekends, and each nurse and professional clinician will be trained on Misys and using the laptop computer by August. That is the beauty of our staff. They do what they need to do to get the job done. I can’t say enough about them.”

She says that paperwork is the biggest drudgery or negative to home care. “Anytime you can streamline the paperwork, it’s a welcome change. Once some of our nurses learned how to use the computer, they loved it and said they would never go back to paper. Our goal is that our nurses take the computers on each home visit. They will then leave with 80 to 100 percent of the work done,” Petersen explains.

She concludes, “This has also been a great opportunity for everyone to learn how to use a computer. Nowadays, everything is computerized. I’m hoping this will help our nurses and other clinicians in other areas of their lives.”

INSIDE CARE

Dr. Robert Evans, D.O., family practice, medical director for Care Corporation, has been appointed to Board of Directors of the American Medical Directors Certification Program. This program offers certification for medical directors in the long-term care continuum.

Congratulations to Sandy Fife, Home Health Aide for Care Corporation, who was recently named Home Health Aide of the Year! Sandy does an exceptional job working with patients, and her supervisors, coworkers and patients say she is dependable, hard working and a joy to know.

Care Corp Home Health Aide Jan Turk has two daughters off doing interesting things. Michelle Turk is currently volunteering in Panama teaching “cleanliness,” while Allison Turk is attending World United College in New Mexico. Students from all over the world attend, and Allison was one of 50 applicants accepted out of a pool of 400 applicants. This summer she will also be in New York teaching autistic children.

Best wishes to Lisa Milgate, Receptionist at Care Corp, and her husband Corey on the purchase of their first home.

Tanner Joseph Krantz was welcomed into the world on July 4th at 7’15” and 20 oz. to Karie (Takacs) and Steve Krantz. Tanner is the second grandchild for Marty Takacs, RN, Manager of Skilled Services at Care Corporation. Baby and grandma are doing fine! Marty’s daughter Kristie also became engaged to Charlie Thompson on July 1.
Everyone experiences loss – whether through the death of a loved one, a divorce, a job, etc. Our lives are built around a continuum of loss, and it’s how we learn to cope with loss that causes growth. Care Corp’s Life’s Work – From Loss Toward Growth class provides information and tools to help people work through their loss and achieve growth.

Jim Guseilo teaches and leads this class at Care Corporation. Guseilo earned a Master of Science in Social Administration (M.S.S.A.) from the Case Western Reserve University Mandel School of Applied Social Science in 2001. Today, the licensed social worker and bereavement counselor finds fulfillment in helping people work through loss, and the grief associated with it.

“Everyone experiences the same first loss – at birth. We are forced to leave the protected, warm, cozy environment of our mother’s womb, and it’s that moment we begin to learn how to cope,” he says. “Loss is an inescapable fact of life. How people deal with loss is individually variable and unique.”

Guseilo describes grief as a natural result of a natural event. He defines “loss” as a state of being deprived of something that was once possessed, such as through death, divorce, disaster or crime. Class participants explore the feelings experienced in loss: mad (furious, bitter, hateful, hostile, distrust, hurt resentful), sad (defeated, ignored, pessimistic, dejected, depressed, devastated, lonely, guilty), glad (safe, sympathetic, tender, brave, peaceful, warm, relieved) and scared (pressured, trapped, apprehensive, vulnerable, terrified, victimized, fearful, insecure).

“There is no set order or pattern to the feelings an individual experiences after a loss,” explains the licensed social worker. “Everyone does not necessarily go through every experience, nor do they go through them in any set order. Each person has his or her own timetable and own style of grief. One may struggle with several feelings at the same time. The depth and duration of each experience is different for everyone. Understanding the various phases, though, helps a person to cope, knowing that others have gone through this pain and have eventually been able to reinvest themselves in life again. This gives one a sense of hope.”

“There is also a psychological response to loss that everyone experiences to varying degrees depending on how important the loss was, or a ‘grief loop’: loss, protest, despair, detachment and reorganization. Much like a physical injury, when we experience an emotional injury, a natural healing process begins. Each one of us can actively facilitate this process by being aware of it, understanding it, and by trusting it! We can move naturally from surviving the loss, to healing, and then to growing.”

The first major grieving cycle releases a lot of energy for healing and makes subsequent cycles less intense, of less duration, and less often. “But it’s never over,” Guseilo admits. “The truth is we will never find a substitute but something will fill the gap. Grief is work. If you allow yourself to express your sorrow, you’ll find acceptance easier.”

Guseilo says most people who attend the class have experienced a recent loss – the death of a spouse, parent, child or other loved one. “But some people come 20 years later after their loss. They are just ready to deal with it now.”

“There is no set formula to grief — you do this and this and this and you’re done. That’s not what we’re about in this class. We do not offer a cookbook approach, but we explain the process of loss: remembering the past, redefining the present and recreating the future. Much of this work happens simultaneously in people. To use a newly coined phrase, they multi-task,” he adds.

Guseilo offers this advice to people, “Don’t ‘should’ on yourself; don’t let anyone else ‘should’ on you; and don’t ‘should’ on anyone else.”

“If you free what is inside you, It will make you free; If you hold onto what is inside you, It will destroy you.”

Zen proverb

Everything shared in class in confidential. Guseilo concludes, “I will never give advice. I will ask questions. I want people in the class to explore who they are. What they do with the information they gather through this class is their business.”

Life’s Work – From Loss Toward Growth is a structured, six-week program that meets once a week on Thursdays beginning October 6 through November 10, 2005 from 6 to 8 p.m. at Care Corporation, 831 South Street, in Chardon.

Registration is required by calling Care Corp at (440) 286-CARE, (440) 338-6628, or (440) 632-5991.
Care Corp Kicks Off New Promotional Campaign

It’s always fun to wear something new. That’s how it feels for the staff at Care Corporation as we kick off a new 2005-2006 promotional campaign throughout Geauga County.

The campaign launch began with a new logo and slogan: “Care Corp – Covering Your Home Care Needs.” As you may know, Care Corp provides a full menu of home care services for you or your loved one: skilled nursing; Home Health Aides; Homemaker/Companions; physical, speech and occupational therapy; Hospice; respite; bereavement support, and much more. You will see this new logo on everything Care Corp distributes in the community – brochures, letterhead, business cards, newspaper advertisements and billboards.

Also, for the first time Care Corp will be advertising on cable television. Watch for our commercial on Fox News Channel, A & E, the History Channel, and American Movie Classics. Care Corp’s own Debbie Koch, RN, stars in this commercial along with the father-in-law, daughter and grandchildren of Shirley Baker, RN, president and founder of Care Corporation.

We hope you enjoy the new "look" as much as we do!