

SITUATION

Mary Jean Lafata was presented with a challenge by a home care physician at CNS Home Health & Hospice, a full-service home health affiliate of Central DuPage Hospital in northwest suburban Chicago, where she manages all therapists.

Because of the increasing number of families struggling with difficult decisions over their parents' health care needs, the doctor asked Lafata to find a means of assessing approximate cognitive levels. Such information would be invaluable in properly determining how much assistance the patients might require and thus the degree of independent living that was called for.

Having attended Dementia Care Specialists (DCS) training programs, Lafata understood that with proper training, clinicians could make well-informed assessments to guide the family and health care teams in addressing thorny questions about the degree of care that was needed.

"With DCS training and consultation, we were able to use the assessment process to develop appropriate treatment plans—to advise families on the level at which their parent is functioning and to recommend a level of care based upon that individual's unique circumstances—not a cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all plan," said Lafata.

What has evolved is a comprehensive process involving staff and the family working together to examine functional levels and develop treatment plans that are tailored to the capacity of the individual and designed to maximize that person's quality of life.

The onset of dementia can be a time of great family stress, filled with difficult questions such as whether a parent should continue driving, how long he/she can remain in his/her home, etc. At times, that frustration can lead to conflicts with therapeutic staff over the need for specific levels of care. Lafata finds the DCS training has given staff a common vocabulary to reassure and calm family members.

"DCS training has been critical in allowing our staff to communicate with families on a higher level—to clearly lay out options and to assuage their fears that they may not be making the proper decisions. By guiding the discussion away from fears over what a parent can no longer do and focusing upon what that person can do successfully, the dynamic is changed into one characterized by far more understanding and dignity."

"Change is often difficult for families to accept and adjust to, but the DCS training has provided an ability to unemotionally point out the subtleties of behavioral changes that accompany dementia and the steps that can be taken to prevent further complications."

-Mary Jean Lafata
CNS Home Health & Hospice
Carol Stream, IL

RESULTS

According to Lafata, the response among care-giving staff to the training was very positive. "They feel they have a whole new toolbox to use in their daily interaction with patients in homes and in assisted living communities. My therapists in the assisted and independent living facilities have had an overwhelmingly positive response to the training they obtained."

Lafata finds these tools to be empowering for both family members and facility staff. "The caregiver has a greater sense of satisfaction in doing something positive, the patient gets joy out of what they are doing, and the family has peace of mind from knowing they have properly identified a care plan that best meets the parent's abilities."

Managers of home health care businesses increasingly recognize that as our nation ages, the prudent health care firm will increasingly recognize that *dementia capable care* will become more and more of a mandate. "We have found that doing what is right for the patient makes good business sense," said Lafata.

Due to a market awareness of the special care being provided, Lafata's business has prospered. "As our customers understand the value and quality of services we provide, demand has increased—it's been good for the bottom line."

ABOUT DEMENTIA CARE SPECIALISTS, A CPI SPECIALIZED OFFERING

Dementia Care Specialists (DCS) is the premier dementia training and consulting company. With nearly 60 years of cumulative experience in dementia care training, DCS provides state-of-the-art dementia products, training, and program consultation. Training from Dementia Care Specialists helps transform staff capabilities and quality of care. As a result, persons with dementia experience a higher quality of life, caregivers find more job satisfaction, and providers improve their business results.

Dementia Care Specialists is a CPI specialized offering. CPI is an international training organization with more than 30 years of experience in crisis prevention and intervention training.