

LIFELINE INCREASES PATIENT SECURITY AND INDEPENDENCE

Lifeline, the leading personal response system, is now available throughout our entire service area. With the touch of a button, the Lifeline system automatically connects with trained Lifeline Associates who assess the situation and contact the appropriate emergency assistance. Lifeline response time is usually less than 30 seconds.

Lifeline helps patients live more active, independent lives at home. Lifeline is especially helpful for patients with physical limitations, chronic heart or lung problems.

Lifeline fees are \$40 for the first month (which includes installation and activation) and \$35 each month thereafter for monitoring service. Upon request of service, installation usually occurs within 3 business days by trained home health aides or volunteers.

For more information about Lifeline services, contact our Lifeline Coordinator at 800-660-4867

TO ADD OR DELETE A NAME PLEASE CALL (800) 660-4867

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HomeHealth 
VISITING NURSES OF SOUTHERN MAINE

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www.homehealth.org
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The MaineHealth Family

SECOND EDITION WINTER 2005-2006

Inside HomeHealth

BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER FOR PATIENTS, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS

2005 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

By Mia Millefogle, Vice President,
Development and Marketing

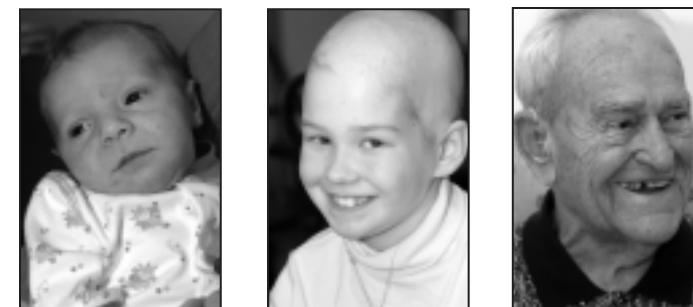
We are pleased to present a summary of our 2005 Annual Report to the Community and the highlights of our first full year as HomeHealth – Visiting Nurses of Southern Maine.

During the past fiscal year, our nurses, rehabilitative therapists, social workers and home health aides traveled over 1.6 million miles throughout our service area that encompasses 23,189 miles.

In this year, we provided the following services:

- Home health care to patients in 69 towns, cities and islands 24 hours/day, 7 days a week
- 107,815 home visits to 7,343 new patients that include newborns, children and adults
- 7,351 health tests and screenings to 6,659 clients at one of our 275 clinics
- 388 Telehealth “video visits” to 78 patients with at-risk cardiac problems
- Over 10,000 hours of volunteer support

These figures represent patients like Elena – a newborn filled with promise, Katie – facing her third battle with cancer and Armand – gaining strength and independence following a leg injury.



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BEAT THE WINTER BLUES

Many people feel down during the dark, cold winter months. This dip in mood may be caused by a biochemical imbalance in the brain due to the shortening of daylight hours and the lack of sunlight in winter. These winter blues may be linked to Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) – a mood disorder related to seasonal changes of light. For many people, SAD is a seriously disabling illness, preventing them from functioning normally without continuous medical treatment. For others, it causes mildly debilitating discomfort but not severe suffering. SAD affects 10 million to 25 million Americans every winter season, in particular during December, January and February. SAD symptoms may include:

- Desire to oversleep or disturbed sleep patterns
- Feeling of fatigue and inability to carry out a normal routine
- A craving for sugary and/or starchy “comfort” foods
- Loss of self-esteem
- Feelings of misery, guilt, hopelessness and despair
- Apathy and loss of feelings
- Difficulty concentrating and processing information
- Irritability and desire to avoid social contact
- Tension and inability to tolerate stress
- Decreased interest in physical contact
- Full remission from depression in the spring and summer months

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These services advance the mission and the rich 100-year history that precedes our organization beginning with the first visiting nurse hired by the city of Saco in 1896, followed by the creation of Portland District Nursing Association in 1904, and the formation of nursing agencies in Sanford, Westbrook, Biddeford, Saco, Old Orchard Beach, Scarborough, Cape Elizabeth, Wells, and York. Throughout this history, numerous agencies merged over time with the goal of consolidating resources, reducing costs and expanding services. In keeping with these goals, Community Health Services of Cumberland County and Visiting Nurse Service of York County merged in March 2004 to create HomeHealth – Visiting Nurses of Southern Maine, a member of the MaineHealth Family.

We have set a solid foundation that includes achieving Medicare certification without deficiencies, accreditation through the Community Health Accreditation Program (CHAP), a comprehensive benefit program, an agency-wide electronic medical record, and standardized policies for both clinical and human resources. Through a grant from the Davis Foundation, we expanded our Home Telehealth Program to Cumberland County. Today heart failure patients throughout southern Maine can receive Telehealth interventions, a state-of-the-art technology that allows our nurses to conduct interactive “video” visits from a central base station. In addition, Lifeline, the leading personal response system, was expanded throughout our service area. With financial support from towns and grants from the United Way of Portland and York County, we extended services to those patients in greatest need who lacked insurance or other resources to pay for care.

To learn more about our services or for a copy of our Annual Report, please call 1-800-660-4867 or view our newly launched website at:
www.homehealth.org

The Social Workers’ Role at HomeHealth-VNSM

By Jacqueline Alpert, MSW

A social worker’s role is multifaceted. Social workers are trained in counseling to help individuals cope with life challenges. Social workers also serve as advocates for their patients and help them obtain community resources that can improve quality of life.

HomeHealth-VNSM social workers work as a team with nurses and therapists to care for and support patients receiving our home health care services. Social workers often assist patients who are returning home from the hospital with deteriorating health or a temporary disability related to surgery. Patients may be anxious about changes in their health and its impact on independence and safety. Social workers can help by providing counseling to decrease anxiety and teaching tools to help patients gain confidence and emotional strength.

Social workers also are frequently asked to help when a family member who is a caregiver becomes overwhelmed with responsibilities, feels isolated and/or is discouraged. Our social workers provide supportive counseling and information about community resources to assist caregivers in their role.

To help describe the role of our social work services, we have summarized a case example. One of our social workers visited George, who was being cared for by his wife, Bertha. George had been in and out of the hospital due to complications related to diabetes and lung disease. He was fairly weak and Bertha provided most of his personal care. She also did all the cooking, cleaning, laundry and household chores. During the home visit, Bertha confided that she was often exhausted and worried about their finances, as the cost of heating oil had increased dramatically. The social worker provided counseling and support to the couple. Bertha was able to share

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Some experts believe the condition can and should be treated by conventional depression therapies like antidepressant drugs but, if you find the dark months of winter difficult, there are other simple steps you can try to beat the winter blues.

Compensate for lack of sunshine

Although there have been no research findings to definitely link this therapy with an antidepressant effect, many people respond very well to phototherapy or bright light therapy using full spectrum lights. For mild SAD symptoms, spending time outdoors during the day or arranging your home and workplace to receive more natural sunlight may be helpful.

Eat well

Although eating sugary or starchy foods may make you feel better for 10 minutes, a high-fat, carbohydrate-rich diet is more likely to exacerbate the winter blues in the long run. When you are feeling down, it is extra important to keep up a varied and balanced diet. Try to find “comfort” foods that are nutritious and delicious, like potatoes, homemade soups and baked bananas.

Exercise

Exercise is known to boost people’s mood and help alleviate depression. The most important rule to winter activity is to choose something you enjoy. Whether it’s walking, an aerobics class or simple home exercises, doing a bit of something you like every day will do you a world of good. If you can find an activity that gets you outside and the weather is cooperative, the winter sunlight may give your mood an extra boost.

Get extra support

If the winter is a struggle for you, tell your family and friends so that they can support you. They will appreciate knowing why you are irritable and depressed and how they can help.

Only a trained health care professional can determine if you are suffering from a mild case of the “winter blues,” SAD, or a more serious clinical depression. If you have feelings of uncontrolled sadness, fatigue, worthlessness or suicide, please talk to your doctor immediately for treatments or therapies that can help you beat the winter blues.

This article was excerpted from the following websites:

www.sada.org.uk

www.bupa.co.uk/health_information/html/healthy_living/emotional/depression/winter_blues.html

www.nmha.org/infoctr/factsheets/27.cfm

www.mercola.com/2004/jan/17/winter_depression.html

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her feelings regarding the difficulties of being a caregiver and learned ways to take time for herself. George learned to better cope with discouragement about his decreased independence and increased reliance on Bertha. The social worker also identified resources to help with the cost of oil and identified other community resources to help with grocery shopping, housework and laundry. The social work intervention with George and Bertha helped both of them feel better about themselves and enabled them to focus on what was most important - Bertha’s caregiving and George’s healing.

If you or someone you love is in need of our support, please call (800) 660-4867 for more information about our social work services.