

**FACULTY GUIDE**

**Supplemental Module 3**

**Working with the Healthcare Team**

**December 2017**

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## Module 3: Working with the Healthcare Team

### Slide 1:

Working with the Healthcare Team discusses ways that you, as a caregiver, can interact productively with clinicians and other healthcare personnel. It is the third part of a series developed under a contract from the Health Resources and Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services. HHS's Office of Women's Health funded the series.

### Slide 2:

You will learn the following during this presentation:

- How teamwork requires every member's active, careful participation
- Your role—as the caregiver—on a team
- The four necessary skills to be the best caregiver possible

### Slide 3:

By working together, the caregiver, the person living with dementia, community service providers, and health care providers can choose the best treatment and service options as they become necessary.

That said, establishing a good working relationship is not always easy. You must always honor the wishes of the person living with dementia. Your job, as the caregiver, is to remind other team members about what is going on in the life of a person living with dementia and in your life too. This helps other team members understand your concerns better. Communication needs to flow both ways.

### Slide 4:

The role of the healthcare provider is to inform the caregiver about any current or new diagnoses, and health prospects for the person living with dementia, both with and without available treatments. Community-based organizations provide the caregiver with information about services that are available to the person living with dementia and to the caregiver.

### Slide 5:

The role of the caregiver is to inform the healthcare team and community-based organizations that provide services about the values of the person living with dementia, as well information about his/her service needs, health, and overall well-being.

Sometimes multiple health providers, who are unaware of one another, are providing care for persons living with dementia. As a result, medications and diagnoses may be duplicated or missed.

As a caregiver, you are in the best position to keep all members of the healthcare team up-to-date about the different health services that the person living with dementia is receiving.

### Slide 6:

There are several tips for working well with other members of the healthcare team.

- Be organized and maintain up-to-date lists of medications, treatments and appointments.

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- Keep notes in a single place like a notebook so you can report changes in symptoms, behavior, and possible side effects of medications.
- When you notice a change in the person living with dementia, call the healthcare providers quickly and update them.
- Ask questions until you understand the treatment plan and know you can oversee the plan.
- Advocate for change if you believe something is wrong or can be better.

Using the skills listed here will improve your communication with providers on the health care team.

### Slide 7:

Caregivers are important sources of information. Most healthcare providers only see the part of the picture that relates to the office visit. Caregivers are often the only ones who have all of the updated information. By sharing that information, health providers on the team can make decisions based on recent information.

To help manage this information, you may use a notebook or computer to update all the diagnoses and medications for the person living with dementia. By doing this, you will reduce the chances of medical errors. Because office visits are generally short, the information will help you make the most of each encounter.

One important step is to write down or record any questions you want to ask. Consider asking if you can record the visit on a cell phone.

Because health care providers are often pressed for time, practice asking questions in front of a mirror to help you prepare or send an e-mail to the health care providers, but remember that some providers will not use email because of privacy concerns.

Being prepared for office visits will help get your concerns addressed.

### Slide 8:

The National Institute on Aging has information to help caregivers and persons living with dementia prepare for visits with healthcare providers.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has information for caregivers of veterans.

### Slide 9:

Caregiver insight into even the slightest changes in mood, behavior, or symptoms is very useful for health care providers. Contact health care providers by phone or by email if you observe a change in condition.

Your input is especially useful when the person living with dementia is in the hospital or other unfamiliar setting. By being watchful, you may stop a problem before it becomes too big to resolve quickly.

### Slide 10:

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Caregivers have a right to be included in decision-making and should receive health updates on patient status, treatment and management.

You need information to make good decisions and asking questions is a good way to get that information.

- Ask questions about changes in the health status of the person living with dementia or prescribed medications.
  - If a health care provider does not have the answers, inquire about where you can find the information or get a referral to another provider.
  - If necessary, do not hesitate to speak to the person in charge.
  - If you feel a health care provider is not addressing your concerns, respectfully bring attention to the issue.

By being persistent, you can make help address problems quickly.

NIH's MedlinePlus provides a list of questions you may want to ask your healthcare provider to help you take the best care possible of the person living with dementia.

### Slide 11:

Sometimes it is in the best interest of the person living with dementia to get a new health care provider. Providers move or retire. Some insurance plans may limit the providers who can provide care.

- Finding a new health care provider can be hard and you will need to advocate for this change.
- A large clinic may be able to arrange a transfer to another office.
- You can make your job easier by finding the right health care provider with whom to work.

### Slide 12:

Good teamwork requires the cooperation of all members of the healthcare team.

Everyone needs to participate in the decision-making, be active members of the team, and be proactive in addressing the health care issues of the person living with dementia.

You have the right to ask questions and should be able to get good answers to those questions. As a caregiver, you should not hesitate to respectfully stand up for yourself when you sense care is not right.

It is easier to be a caregiver when communication is a two-way street.