



# THE HEALTH CARE TEAM INCLUDES THE CAREGIVER

## PRIMARY CARE PRACTICE FACT SHEET #3

Supporting the caregiver and the health care team is a critical part of the MPPC program.

The health care system, as we know it in America, could not exist without the informal network of family caregivers. Eighty percent of all elder care is provided at home by family members.

### Important principles to remember

- The availability of family caregivers often determines whether a frail older person can remain at home or be forced to move to a more costly nursing facility.
- In today's health-care delivery system, hospitals typically provide short-term care for patients who are acutely ill. Patients are often discharged with complex management plans that would have extended their hospital stays only a few years ago. Some of the interventions caregivers are called on to carry out would once have required the patient to remain in intensive care.

### The caregiver should provide and receive information

- Caregivers perform many vital, health related functions, including assisting with activities of daily living, and administering and monitoring medications.
- The caregiver and the physician are partners in care. Caregivers can be the eyes and ears of the physician as they report on the patient's response to treatment. For example, many caregivers help manage drug therapies. By informing the physician of obvious and subtle variations in the patient's condition, they provide information that would otherwise be the responsibility of a trained nurse in a formal health care environment.
- Caregivers also serve as case managers, coordinating delivery of outpatient care, arranging transportation, and handling the financial aspects of their family member's care.

### Critical information for caregivers

- As an integral part of the health care team, family members need the following information:
  - o Is this particular test, treatment, or procedure absolutely necessary? What other options are available?
  - o What are the risks and benefits from the test, treatment, or procedure?
  - o How much will this cost, and how much is covered by Medicare or insurance?

### PRIMARY CARE PRACTICE TIP

**It is always in the patient's best interest if each member of the caregiving team communicates fully and shares information with each other.**

**For more information call your Area Agency on Aging  
1-877-353-3771**

Maine Primary Partners in Caregiving is a joint project of the Eastern Agency on Aging and the University of Maine Center on Aging, in partnership with Aroostook Area Agency on Aging, Eastern Maine Medical Center, Horizons Health Service, Indian Township Tribal Health Center, Norumbega Medical, Rosscare, and Senior Spectrum.