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## **Adult Day Services: A New Senior Health Service of the JHS**

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## **Adult Day Services: A New Senior Health Service of the JHS**

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The Jefferson Health System (JHS) has added adult day services to its continuum of senior health services. Adult day services aim to promote optimum health and independent functioning for adults with cognitive or physical impairments who need supervision. Adult day services are the fastest-growing component of community based, long-term care in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> At an average cost of \$50 a day, adult day services offer a cost-effective alternative to nursing home care.

Adult day care services (ADCSs), or adult day services, are designed to meet the health, personal care and social needs of chronically ill adults in a safe, structured and homelike environment. Many ADCSs offer separate programs for adults with memory impairment and physical impairment. JHS adult day services are provided in Upper Darby and Broomall by Mid-County Senior Services, a member of Main Line Health. Several JHS affiliates also provide ADCSs including Chandler Hall in Newtown, Elderflower in Chestnut Hill, and Christiana Care in Wilmington, Delaware. In April 1999 Main Line Health will open a new ADCS in Devon.

A family caregiver makes the first contact with an ADCS and is usually referred by the local area agency on aging, hospital, nursing homes, physicians, home health agencies, or word-of-mouth. Common diagnoses of participants are dementia, stroke, Parkinson's, congestive heart failure, COPD, diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis and multiple sclerosis. Every participant receives a comprehensive assessment by the staff team of nurse, activity specialist, and social worker. Physical, occupational and speech therapy consultants are available. Family or county paratransit bring the participant to and from the ADCS, which is open from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm to accommodate working caregivers.

Family and staff interaction is a critical aspect of ADCSs. Staff regularly update family on the participant's condition and give support and advice on home care management. Care plans, tailored to the needs of the individual, incorporate the participant's and family's goals to achieve optimal independence and function. Physical exercise, therapeutic and recreational activities, and nursing care are the domains of the care plan. The participant's outcomes are measured against the plan of care. Each participant's status is described and rated monthly using several indicators of functional ability, mental and physical health. Every six months a team of staff and family caregiver meet to review and update the participant's care plan.

Benefits of ADCSs are often seen in participants' increased endurance and functional ability. In a recent survey of participants and family caregivers using Mid-County Senior Services' ADCSs, 100% of respondents agreed that attendance in the adult day program improved participants' quality of life and 90% agreed that it improved participants' health and ability to remain as independent as possible. Another important benefit of ADCSs is the respite provided to caregiving families. A study by Zarit, et al.<sup>2</sup> found that, after three months, family caregivers using adult day services experienced a significant reduction in stress and depression compared to caregivers in a control group.

JHS adult day service providers are licensed by the PA Department of Aging and are members of the National Adult Day Services Association. Next year the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) will offer accreditation for adult day services. JHS adult day service providers are working together to design and

Karen E. Reeve: Adult Day Services: A New Senior Health Service of the JHS

implement participant outcome measures that will illustrate the impact of ADCSs, therefore demonstrating their value as a component of JHS.

Families pay privately for adult day services, or with a subsidy from a county office on aging, or long term-care insurance. JHS ADCS providers contract with Aetna/US Healthcare to reimburse this service as a component of home health care, but the service is rarely authorized by the insurance company. Several bills are being considered in the U.S. House of Representatives (H.R. 745 & 746) that specifically designate adult day services to be reimbursed as part of Medicare covered home health services. JHS, having both adult day services and home health care, is uniquely positioned to integrate these services to best meet the home health needs of its older members. For more information on the Adult Day Services of JHS, please contact Karen Reeve at (610) 353-6642.

### **References**

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2. Zarit SH, Stephens MP, Townsend A, Greene R. Stress reduction for family caregivers: Effects of adult day care use. *Gerontologist*.1998;53B(5):267-277.

### **About the Author**

Karen E. Reeve is President of Mid-County Senior Services at Main Line Health, Jefferson Health System.