

## **Person-Centered Care...a fresh approach!**

Person-centered care...a novel term for a fresh approach to care.

Changing the culture of nursing home care, resulting in a more nurturing, home environment, isn't a process that happens overnight.

In fact, for The Cedars HealthCare Center the process began four years ago.

"Our transformation from two 60-bed units to eight 11- to 18-bed 'neighborhoods' in March 1999 was the first step toward a home environment," said Carla Lehman, HealthCare Center administrator. "The neighborhood concept set the stage for more ongoing changes."

The staff-to-resident ratio was increased in the neighborhood concept, allowing more continuity of care. In the family-type atmosphere staff become well acquainted with residents and residents with staff. This consistency also helps staff communicate more effectively with family members.

"In my years in long-term care I don't think any change has been more important or more dramatic than the trend to person-centered care," said LeRoy Weddle, former CEO of The Cedars CEO. "We now are putting the residents' needs above the schedule."

"We are giving them choices they would have if they could still live in their own home," he added.

To empower the staff, additional training, supervision and support are given.

Part of the educational process is teaching the staff how to care for the residents' medical needs by "de-emphasizing" the task and placing the emphasis on the residents, incorporating their participation whenever possible.

"I've always been an advocate for residents' rights," said Dru Householder, LPN and Neighborhood Manager, who has been with The Cedars nearly 14 years.

"Giving residents more choices over their daily routines makes the entire working atmosphere less stressful. It's harder not having the regimented time frames, but it's more enjoyable for everyone."

"De-scheduling" tasks is a huge challenge. And the most successful means of meeting that challenge has been to encourage mutual participation. As new residents are admitted, staff find out what their routine was like at home and establish a care plan to accommodate that routine.

They focus on lifestyle preferences by adding flexibility to schedules and providing opportunities to participate in a variety of activities. The emphasis is on allowing residents to make as many choices as they possibly are able.

## **Person-Centered care – 2**

“I have a very unique diet,” said HealthCare Center resident Claron Brown. “My chief concern in moving to The Cedars was that I wouldn’t be allowed to eat what I wanted. But my special needs have been respected,” he said. “In fact, I do a lot of coming and going, and that’s okay also. Individual needs are recognized.”

For those residents unable to make choices due to dementia or other cognitive or physical impairments, the staff work at validating feelings and recognizing emotions to help residents feel worthwhile and maintain their dignity. This reduces stress and ultimately problematic behavior.

Because of its commitment to person-centered care, The Cedars was one of only seven nursing homes in Kansas honored recently as a PEAK Pioneer, an award presented by the Kansas Department on Aging for progressive models of care.

“A recent study showed that 95 percent of Americans would rather die than move into a nursing home,” said Mrs. Lehman. “It’s time we change that image!

“Culture change in nursing homes cannot be accomplished by changes in organizational framework alone,” she added. “It is an ongoing commitment to value changes where the focus of care is not the task, but the relationship.”

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