

Health care professionals face caregiver burnout

Q. My wife is a social worker at a local hospital. In addition, she is helping to care for her aging parents living in their own home. I'm concerned about her own physical and emotional health, but she maintains she is fine. Maybe she will listen to advice from you.

professional relative can handle everything. This is not necessarily true and the stress of double duty caregiving, at the office and at home, can cause serious health and emotional problems. Caregiver burnout is often the result.

Therapist Leonard Felder, co-author of a new book, "When a Loved One is Ill: How to Take Better Care of Your Loved One, Your Family, and Yourself," suggests that the sooner you recognize the symptoms of caregiver burnout, the sooner you can alleviate it by practicing what you preach at your job and seeking assistance using your professional contacts. Respite care, support groups, meal services, homemaker service and support groups are available.

A. Having almost the identical experiences I can relate to how you and your wife feel. I have found that most health care professionals are not only practicing in their field but also are responsible for the care of one or two frail parents, grandparents, a spouse, child or friend. Health care professionals have a tendency to feel that they can do it all and unfortunately other family members may assume that their



on aging
Renee Mahler

Dr. Felder offers these specific clues that should warn you if you are getting close to burnout: Do you tell other people you are fine if it's not true, are you not getting treatment for any type of your physical discomfort or feelings of exhaustion or depression, are you losing interest in friends, hobbies or outside activities you have always enjoyed, do you feel impatient and short-tempered with people you see daily, do you

take your family member's condition personally, do you get angry at family or friends who tell you to show down or that you deserve a break?

The warning signs of a stress overload not only apply to health care professionals but to all caregivers. It is very important to remember that no one can be expected to or expect themselves to do it all. There are services that can help and responsi-

bility can and should be delegated to the agencies and organizations offering help and to other family members. You cannot take care of other people's needs without considering your own.

Q. My 79 year old father lives in his own apartment. He takes several drugs and I am concerned that he may not be taking his medications correctly. Do you have any suggestions I might pass along to him concerning drug usage?

A. The National Institute on Drug Abuse, a division of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, has published a list of Do's and Don'ts, concerning the taking of drugs, that is useful for everyone. The Do's are: tell your doctors about all the medicines you are taking and about any allergies or sensitivity you may have to any drug, be certain you understand all instructions before starting to use a drug including when to take it, with what, how long to continue and what to do if problems occur, make certain you take your medicines when you are supposed to, call your physician if you notice any new symptoms or side effects, keep drugs in airtight containers and store them properly, and keep a record of all drugs and vaccines you are sensitive or allergic to. The don'ts are: take more, or less, than the prescribed amount of any drug, stop taking a drug without checking with your doctor even if you feel better, take drugs prescribed for someone else or give yours to someone else, transfer a drug from its original bottle to another or keep old or expired medicines in your medicine cabinet.

Drugs can provide great benefits but with these benefits also come serious risks. Drugs are powerful sub-

stances and if they're not used carefully, the consequences can be serious. Because elderly people generally take more medicines than anyone else, they naturally run a higher risk of having problems with drugs. Many of these risks can be prevented if medications are used correctly.

Q. Last year, the Alzheimer's Association had a great fund-raising that included sampling of all kinds of chocolate. Are they planning on repeating it again this year?

A. The 5th Annual Chocolate Jubilee, presented by the Alzheimer's Association of Metropolitan Detroit, will be held this year on Dec. 2 at the Somerset Inn, Troy. This year's event is called Chocolate and Diamonds. In addition to the chocolate displays and samples, by the area's finest chocolatiers, many local jewelers, who belong to the Diamond Information Center will be displaying \$4,000,000 of their beautiful and exciting new diamond creations.

A \$100 per person Patron Brunch will be held at noon prior to the Chocolate and Diamonds event. Patrons will get a preview of the displays prior to the actual opening of the fund-raiser. The doors will be open to the general public 2-4 p.m. Tickets are \$25 per person. All proceeds go to the Alzheimer's Association.

For tickets or additional information call the Alzheimer's Association, 557-8277, Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Renee Mahler is a gerontologist and the director of communications and admissions at a Rochester Hills nursing facility. Send your questions to her at Observer & Eccentric, 805 East Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009.

around Oakland

Public hearing on parks \$\$\$

The Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission will conduct a public hearing on the proposed 1991 budget of \$10.5 million.

The hearing — designed to obtain public input — will be at 9 a.m. Wednesday, Dec. 5, at the commis-

sion's main office at 2800 Watkins Lake Road, Waterford.

The commission provides facilities for camping, boating, nature programs, golf, tennis and cross-country skiing. Programming is also provided for the senior citizens and

the handicapped.

It operates nine parks: Addison Oaks in Addison Township, Glen Oaks in Farmington Hills, Groveland Oaks near Holly, Independence Oaks near Clarkston, Orion Oaks in Orion township, Red Oaks in Madison Heights, Springfield Oaks in Davisburg, Waterford Oaks near Pontiac and White Lake Oaks near Pontiac.

Public comments may be made in person at the hearing or mailed to The Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission, 2800 Watkins Lake Road, Waterford, MI 48328. Information available at 558-0906.

Crisis agency needs helpers

Common Ground, Oakland's 24-hour crisis center, needs volunteers to provide telephone and face-to-face counseling.

Volunteers do not need experience, although they will be screened. Training will be provided.

Common Ground, which has provided crisis intervention for 20 years, also needs volunteers to handle clerical and computer work. Experience is not necessary.

An orientation session for prospective volunteers will be held at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 5, at the Common Ground offices at 751 Hendrie Boulevard in Royal Oak.

No appointment is necessary. Additional information is available through Liz Christopher at 543-3050.

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