SOCIAL WORK IN LONG-TERM CARE YOUR KEY TO BETTER HEALTH

Comprehensive long-term care is provided in a variety of home and community settings including independent living, assisted living, and nursing homes. Long-term care social workers and their colleagues focus on managing life transitions while supporting people's independence, autonomy, and safety. A range of issues are addressed related to the physical and emotional well-being of long-term care recipients and their family members. This collaborative approach is essential for the provision of person- and family-centered, culturally congruent, quality care, and is **key to better health**.

Social workers in long-term care **promote health** and **enhance hope** by providing individualized support, education, and counseling to patients and families by:

- **Completing** biopsychosocial, spiritual, and environmental assessments to identify strengths and resource needs
- **Providing** evidence-informed interventions to enhance support and well-being
- **Navigating** complex healthcare systems, life, and care transitions
- **Weighing** patient and family preferences with risk, safety, frailty, and function
- **Convening** family meetings to aid in understanding illness and care options
- **Coordinating** social, emotional, and direct care services
- **Advocating** for policies that improve care on behalf of the individual and their family
- **Addressing** social drivers of health and other barriers to care
- **Collaborating** with team members to address patient and family needs

Social workers enable healthcare providers to focus on what they do best while working to ensure that people get what is needed to manage their health and well-being. Committed to social justice, social workers **improve healthcare outcomes** by aligning care to patient needs and preferences which reduces unnecessary expenditures and overtreatment, increases patient satisfaction, and mitigates disparities.

Social Work in Long-Term Care in Action:

Mr. Liu (87) and Mrs. Liu (85), married for 62 years, are living in their two-story family home. Mr. Liu's dementia has worsened. Following several recent falls, Mrs. Liu realizes that she is no longer able to safely care for her husband. She is concerned about the cost of formal care. Emma, their social worker, meets with them about Mr. Liu's transition to memory care and to explore financial support. She arranges a family meeting to meet the health team and explore care goals. Later, she arranges a facility tour and answers their questions about transitioning to a long-term care setting. Upon admission, Emma continues to help them as they adjust to the emotional and physical changes associated with living apart.

References:

- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2022). *The national imperative to improve nursing home quality: Honoring our commitment to residents, families, and staff*. The National Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/26526
- National Association of Social Workers. (2008). *Social work in long-term care and aging: Decreased health care costs, increased quality of life*. National Association of Social Workers. https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=WLe4RjXa8KA%3D&portalid=0

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