Study Guide 2: Caring for the Frail Elderly

This unit examines several important questions. The Looking Ahead box on p. 336 of your text outlines the major questions you should be prepared to discuss in class on January 23rd.

- How does the type of care family members provide to an elderly relative differ depending on their gender?
- How do the responsibilities of caregiving affect a family member’s work and personal life?
- How does an aged person’s need for care affect family relationships?
- What kind of home and community-based services are available to the frail elderly?
- Can private long-term care insurance help families to manage the expense and burden of caregiving?
- How have government regulations and the rise of for-profit nursing home chains affected the availability and quality of nursing home care?
- What is life in a nursing home like for the frail elderly?

For your reflection paper, choose one of the following scenarios and outline your plan. Your paper should be no longer than 2 pages, and may be written in outline or “talking points” form: [20 points]

1. You are a social worker charged with providing a support plan for stressed-out sandwich-generation caregivers. Assuming an “ideal community,” describe a typical support program or options you would present to one of the following clients:
   - A 55-year old daughter (who has her own family of husband and two school-aged children), whose 80-year-old mother has been diagnosed with terminal breast cancer, and whose father suffers from advanced Alzheimer’s. The daughter lives about 6 miles away from her parents. Her mother, who has been given 6 months to live, wants to remain living at home, and the family has agreed that the father should remain in his home as long as his wife is living. The daughter is prepared to stay overnight and provide regular care, but can’t always be with her parents. Other family members and friends have offered help, but not on a regular basis.
   - A 35-year-old single mother of two children (3 and 10 years old) has moved her ailing mother to live with her. The mother suffers from Parkinson’s and sometimes becomes disoriented. The daughter has to work full-time to support the family, but can be home in the evenings.
2. You work as an Intake Social Worker for a nursing facility. Describe the kinds of services and assessments you would want to provide for new residents to insure a smooth and supportive transition to long-term (at least one year) care, especially for those who until their admission had lived independently.

You should also turn in or email me your first “Connecting With Elders” Journal entry. [15 points]

Here are some Internet resources you should find useful for studying this subject and writing your reflection paper:

The Administration on Aging (http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov/) has extensive resources on care of the frail elderly in homes and in long-term care facilities. The National Family Caregiver Support Program, launched in September 2001, provides fact sheets, locators, research, and numerous other resources of interest to both students and caregivers.

The Health Care Financing Administration (http://www.hcfa.gov) provides information on Medicare and Medicaid programs for elders. You will find answers to questions about coverage and regulations here.

The Eden Alternative site (http://www.edenalternative.com) gives information about Eden Alternative certified sites (the only one in Oregon was Baptist Manor in Portland, and it has now developed its own approach), Eden training programs, and articles/research about the Eden Alternative. You might also be interested in reading William H. Thomas’s books and articles, including Life Worth Living: How Someone You Love Can Still Enjoy Life in a Nursing Home. The Eden Alternative in Action, 1996.

The National Family Caregivers Association (http://www.nfcacares.org) has many useful resources, some of which you can order for free, including the Caregiver Survival Kit.

I will share some additional resources with you in class.