



Dorothy's Story - When A Caregiver Lives At A Distance PART II



JUDITH S. PARNES, L.C.S.W., C.M.C.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ELDER LIFE MANAGEMENT INC.,

Dorothy had been living the last 15 years in an apartment in Central N.J.

Her closest surviving family member was a nephew who lived in California.

Michael maintained regular contact with Dorothy, calling weekly and visiting at least once a year. Dorothy and Michael's mother were sisters. Dorothy was widowed many years and had no children.

During Michael's last visit he was very alarmed to see the decline in his aunt. Her apartment, which was always immaculate, was no longer clean. Her appearance that was always so neat had now changed, and she seemed so frail. Michael discovered by speaking with the management office at the apartment complex that Dorothy was not always current with the rent. They actually told Michael that they were glad to see that Dorothy had someone who could help her. Michael spoke with Dorothy's physician who told him that she really shouldn't be living on her own any more and the recent emergency room visits due to falls were certainly of concern to Michael.

When Michael asked his aunt why she didn't tell him that she needed help when he called each week, her response was "I didn't want to worry you...what could you really do. You live so far away and I am not your responsibility." She repeated what she had told the doctor in the past, that she would be all right and no, she didn't want any help.

Michael couldn't believe no one had contacted him, or that no one had intervened and gotten his aunt any assistance. Everyone said they were so happy that he was now here.

But Michael was at a loss as to what his next step should be. He needed to return to work in California and had only 3 days to remain in New Jersey. The doctor had suggested a few facilities for him to visit. He also contacted the local office on aging and looked on the internet. Everything seemed overwhelming and confusing to him. Even though Dorothy was beginning to see that she really would be happier not being so isolated in her apartment, she was very concerned about what she would be able to afford.

One of the nursing homes Michael visited referred him to Elder Life Management. The admissions person at the facility told him ELM would be able to "put all the pieces together" by working directly with his aunt and coordinating what would be necessary to assure an appropriate care plan.

Michael met with Judith Parnes, the Executive Director of Elder Life Management for a comprehensive consultation. An assessment of Dorothy was subsequently completed, and Michael was able to return to California.

It was determined that Nursing home care was not necessary, and that Dorothy would do well in an assisted living setting. Elder Life Management took on the role of facilitating Dorothy's selection of the assisted living community. This included identifying which setting would accept Medicaid funding in the future, bringing Dorothy to see the places and assisting in her transition and adjustment. Dorothy returned

to her apartment several times after her move to assure that she had all the possessions she wanted, prior to the remainder being donated to her favorite charity. Michael came back to NJ to visit his aunt in the Assisted Living Center two months later and couldn't believe that he had his "old Aunt back again."

Dorothy remains a client of Elder Life Management, being seen quarterly by a Care Manager and following up with the nephew. She has been hospitalized once resulting in a brief Sub Acute stay for rehabilitation, with ELM becoming more involved at that time. Elder Life Management filed the Medicaid application and assured its approval.

Michael believes that the assistance Elder Life Management provided has not only enhanced the quality of Dorothy's life but also his own. Dorothy continues to live comfortably in Assisted Living. And Michael can remain the caregiver at a distance, with Elder Life Management support.

While coordinating health care and medical insurance coverage may be increasingly difficult, there are ways to make the process easier. Even if your loved ones are relatively healthy it is a good idea to be aware of their health histories. You should also document prescription and over the counter medications they are taking and in what dosage. You will need this information to fill in health claim forms correctly and for potential medical emergencies. It is also advisable to obtain a list of all your loved ones health care providers, including addresses and phone numbers.

• **Elder Life Management** offers a Caregiver at A Distance Planning Sheet to help organize your loved one's information in one easily assessable place. To Request a copy please call us 732-493-8080 or e-mail elmcares@aol.com.

Client Testimonials . . .

Your organization is both professional and compassionate in caring for and administering to those who can so easily be forgotten. Thank you for the work you do.

Elizabeth, Ridgewood NJ

I want to thank you for taking such lovely care of my cousin. I appreciated your time spent in dealing with her various health issues. All of her needs were met which helped her to remain happy at the nursing home.

Mary, Florham Park NJ

Thank you! My heart can now be at peace knowing mom will be all right. The phrase weight off my shoulders is very real. Now I can get on with my life. Thank you for everything you do for my mom.

Bernice, Matawan NJ



ELDER LIFE MANAGEMENT, INC.

let us be part of your elder life.

Judith S. Parnes, L.C.S.W., C.M.C.
Executive Director

- Elder care coordination and management
- Medicaid applications
- Identify alternative living arrangements
- Assure quality of care
- Assist in maintaining independence
- Consultation for future care planning
- Home health care

When someone you care about is now someone you care for, we can help.

For a consultation in the comfort of your own home or in our offices, call: **(732) 493-8080**

931 W. Park Ave., Ocean, NJ
www.elderlifemanagement.org



Judith S. Parnes, L.C.S.W., C.M.C., Gerontologist And Elder Care Consultant is Executive Director Of Elder Life Management, Inc., Ocean, NJ. They provide quality elder care planning and management services to older adults and their families. Please visit www.elderlifemanagement.org or call (732) 493-8080 for more information.