Why Is Continuity of Care so Important?

by LEEANNE LAPUM

Understanding Continuity of Care for MS Patients

During my 23-year battle with multiple sclerosis (MS) I have learned so much. My husband and I have done endless research over the Internet. We have reached out to our medical community numerous times.

MS affects so many people. Depending on the type of MS a person has been diagnosed with, the care they receive may vary. One thing is for sure: there desperately needs to be continuity in the way a person is cared for — especially between the medical staff and caregivers.

I am very thankful I have an excellent medical staff as well as a caring husband and family. They work together as a team. The following is a contribution from my former home health nurse, Amy Renee Rizen, RN, concerning the subject of continuity.

Ideally, the nurse will know the patient holistically and be able to develop with the patient a plan of care to help the patient reach and maintain their goals. It is important for the patient to be autonomous while encouraging the family to contribute to the patients overall wellbeing.

While this may take much time and effort for everyone involved, the patient will benefit greatly, the family will feel included as part of the plan of care, and the nurse will become part of a beautiful tapestry that can only be woven by the patient when every other component is intertwined to be as beautiful and individual as the patient themself.

It is very important for the patient to have a consistent skilled nurse to assess them regularly. If the patient is seen by a different nurse, it is more difficult for that clinician to assess and observe changes in them.

This is very important, as subtle changes may be noted and reported to the doctor for early intervention. This may prevent larger issues such as an infection or decline in the overall patient status.

Continuity is also very important so the patient and nurse can develop a rapport. Trust is imperative. It is also important for the patient to feel comfortable with the nurse to minimize anxiety, especially if the patient requires a regular procedure such as a urinary catheter change.

A consistent nurse who practices excellent infection control measures can also minimize the patient's risk of acquiring a nosocomial infection. This will keep the patient in their own home environment and prevent hospitalization.