

Fall 2017 Issue



*"When you are a nurse you know that every day you will touch a life... and a life will touch yours."*

The Fall 2017 issue of KEPRO's Health Care Quality Unit (HCQU) CARES: Nursing Edition newsletter offers tips for nurses to share with caregivers to make the most of the short time spent at the physician's office.

## The Many Hats of Nursing: Caregiver Education

Nurses in provider agencies supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) perform a variety of duties and wear many hats. Some nurses provide direct care to people with complex medical needs and others ensure that vaccinations, medical follow-ups and care are performed in a timely manner. However, all nurses have the unique advantage of educating caregivers to advocate for quality health care to this population. Caregivers often accompany an individual to a medical or psychiatric appointment and can benefit from instruction by nurses on how to facilitate a successful appointment, both for the individual and the physician. The nurse's educator "hat" is ever present when working in this field.

Proper identification and communication of health care needs to the health care provider ensures a positive, productive experience. Without this valuable information, the physician is unable to properly evaluate the person, possibly necessitating a return visit.

The story below is a true incident that occurred a few years ago in a provider agency.

*A caregiver was subbing in a new house he had never worked in before. Due to staffing issues, he was to accompany an individual to a physician's appointment. Upon arrival he gave the medical forms to the physician. Unfortunately, the person delegated to complete the forms only documented that this individual was referred to the specialist by his Primary Care Physician. The person neglected to document why the individual was to be seen. The specialist was unable to continue the visit and wrote, "This person is non-verbal and cannot answer questions and the caretaker does not know why he is here." This was an embarrassing situation for the agency, and a waste of time for all involved.*

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As caregivers are often the liaison between the physician and individual, nurses can provide suggestions to foster a positive relationship between the physician, the agency, and the individual to ensure the appointment is successful. Caregivers can be encouraged to facilitate the relationship between all involved, from the office personnel to the nurses and physician. A good rapport with the office personnel can be established when caregivers are friendly and introduce themselves and the individual they support at appointments. Remind caregivers to arrive on time and be respectful to others in the waiting room. If the person becomes upset and agitated, offer to wait outside the waiting room until called to be seen.

### **Before the Appointment**

- Encourage caregivers to observe and continually document in the person's chart or book: new behaviors, side effects of medications, symptoms of medical illness, care given, and outcome. This information is the foundation for providing information to the physician and can easily be copied onto the appointment form.
- Copy records and bring them to health care specialist appointments, such as seizure records to the neurologist or menses record to gynecologist.
- Remind caregivers to inform the individual of the appointment, why they are being seen, and ask if they have any questions for the physician.
- Ask caregivers on other shifts for their concerns.
- Review documentation on the person's chart from their last appointment and look for any updates that need to be made. Add this information to the appointment form.
- Remind caregivers to be aware of and follow instructions for holding medications if necessary on the day of the appointment. Also, remind them to be aware of NPO orders and to document that they were followed on the medical form.
- If the physician needs to be aware of specific medical information, the nurse can write a letter of explanation to be taken to the appointment along with the medical form. This is especially helpful if a substitute caregiver is required to take the person to the appointment.
- When making the appointment, inform office staff if the person has a difficult time waiting to be seen. A first morning appointment may be helpful for people who are unable to wait for long periods of time.

### **Day of the Appointment**

- On the day of the appointment, remind caregivers to encourage the person to dress in clothing that is easy to remove.
- Bring items to decrease the person's anxiety such as headphones for music, crossword puzzles, etc.
- Ensure the caregiver taking the individual to the appointment knows the person well, such as: how the person communicates, what can reduce anxiety at the appointment, and can explain the reason for the appointment and discuss observations with the physician.



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## During the Appointment

- Encourage caregivers to take notes during the appointment and to ask questions when information is not understood.
- Remind caregivers to be an advocate for the individual by informing the physician to discuss and explain health care issues with the individual and allowing the person time to answer questions, if able.
- Before leaving the appointment caregivers should review the documentation. If it is not legible or understood, encourage them to question the physician. If the appointment is over, ask the front desk personnel for help. Ensure the physician's required signature is on the form.

## After the Appointment

- After the appointment some individuals look forward to celebrating a successful physician visit. On the way home, caregivers can verbally praise the person acknowledging the good experience. They may also consider stopping at a place of the person's choosing or participating in an activity the person enjoys.
- Upon return to the home, new orders from the physician should be followed up by documenting findings of exams or tests and ordering new treatments or medications from the pharmacy.
- Other caregivers working in the home should be updated on new orders or reports.

Nurses working in provider agencies may need to provide oversight initially when assisting caregivers in implementing successful physician visits. However, the short time spent educating caregivers is a worthwhile contributing factor toward many future successful visits.

# Other Medical News

## FDA - First Drug Approved For Tardive Dyskinesia



In April 2017, Ingrezza (valbenazine) was the first drug approved for the treatment of adults with tardive dyskinesia, a serious side effect often associated with taking certain medications, such as antipsychotics. Ingrezza reduces the involuntary movements of the face, tongue, and other areas of the body such as the upper and lower extremities. The most common side effect is somnolence, however other side effects include:

- Headache
- Feelings of restlessness
- Dry mouth
- Constipation
- Blurred vision
- QT prolongation (fast, slow, or irregular heartbeat, shortness of breath, dizziness or fainting)

### References:

<http://www.centerwatch.com/drug-information/fda-approved-drugs/drug/100198/ingrezza-valbenazine>

<https://www.ingrezza.com/>



*We hope this e-newsletter provides useful information to help you and your agency deliver quality care to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. If you have any questions related to physical and/or behavioral health care for individuals with I/DD, please contact KEPRO HCQU at 1-888-321-5861.*

*Sincerely,*

*The KEPRO/Southwestern PA  
Health Care Quality Unit*



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