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*Eileen DeCesare, RN
President / CEO Emeritus*

Greetings!

Looking forward to spring, the season of new life and renewal, Professional Healthcare Resources Inc., continues our commitment to serve our clients well. To many of our homebound patients, spring itself may help to bring a feeling of well being. Coupled with our mission toward service excellence, we remain ever mindful of patient needs. As spring is a great beginning for restarting and revitalizing our commitment to our clients, I join the whole staff of Professional Healthcare Resources in reaffirming our promise to you—we are the home healthcare you can count on. I want to share with you the thoughts of Jim Ball:

- March forth to a healthy life exercise program and diet
- March forth to make progress on your most important goals
- March forth to help others in need
- March forth to be grateful for all your gifts and successes

And may I add my personal note . . .

- March forth to do your very best to take care of others who depend on us for their care

Eileen DeCesare, RN, MS, CNA, LNC
President / CEO Emeritus

Defining and Managing Caregiver Stress

We surpass many milestones throughout life where lessons are learned and goals are achieved. These lessons help us to prepare for whatever life may send our way. That being said, I think you'll agree that nothing can prepare us for that time, when at a blink of an eye, we find that the tables have turned and we are experiencing the realization that we have been placed in the position of "decision maker" regarding the care for a parent or a loved one.

About a quarter of American families are caring for a parent, an older family member, a spouse or a friend. While providing care for a loved one can often be very rewarding, being responsible for having to provide simple routine day-to-day tasks such as bathing, grooming, and dressing can quickly become physically demanding and emotionally challenging.

Being a family caregiver often becomes a juggling act; trying to balance between meeting the needs of your loved one and other important responsibilities such as work, family life and a busy social calendar.

There comes a point when you find yourself struggling to determine what is needed and who should take priority. This situation can lend itself to your feeling frustrated, angry, and guilty. These feelings can even portray themselves as physical complaints; headaches, increased blood pressure, and a nervous stomach.

All of these symptoms are actually manifestations experienced by about 56% of all family caregivers. There is even terminology used to further define "Caregiver Stress – Caregiver Burnout."

Studies have shown that stress plays a substantial role in a person's susceptibility to physical and emotional disorders. Some other indicators that "Caregiver Stress" may be impacting your health include:

- Restless sleeping, not wanting to get out of bed
- Loss of appetite
- Low energy levels
- Lack of concentration

(over)

- Decline in social interaction with others
- Don't have time to spend with family members other than the person being cared for
- Feeling like you don't have time for yourself
- Yelling, screaming, or crying fits
- Irritability
- Blaming others for the situation
- Taking your frustrations out on the person you are caring for
- Developing a "martyr" complex

The management of "Caregiver Stress" is not difficult once you come to the realization that, as much as you want to, you cannot be all things to all people and that there is nothing wrong with reaching out and asking for help. Sounds so simplistic, but with the emotional involvement that exists, it is actually one of the most challenging things to come to terms with.

The overall goal of many family caregivers is to ensure that their loved one is receiving the best care possible. In order to help those in need, you must first take care of yourself. There are some steps that you can take to keep to minimize stress and maintain your own well-being:

- **Realistic Goals:** Set manageable expectations and limits for yourself. Be realistic about what you are able to and willing to do.
- **Basic Necessities:** Make sure to have adequate food, exercise and plenty of rest. Avoid stress-driven urges for overeating and overindulging.
- **Socialization:** Take time for shopping, a movie, or spend time with a friend.
- **Quiet time:** Reading a book, taking a walk, or listening to music. Taking special time for you permits you to continue to handle the myriad of daily demands while maintaining an overall healthy emotional balance.
- **Ask for help:** Enlist the help of other family members and friends. Use community based resources such as meal or shopping services or professional in-home care aide services.

The responsibility of being a family caregiver can be both rewarding and overwhelming. Managing time to ensure that your own personal needs are being met can result in a sense of physical and emotional well-being that will allow you to devote that special time to those you care about most.

By Linda Klingensmith, BSN, RN

An Interview with Keren Slack-Ellis, RN Regional Administrator, Southern Region

Keren Slack-Ellis started with Professional Healthcare in September 2006 in the newly created position of Regional Administrator for our three Southern Virginia offices. She is also acting Branch Manager for both Richmond and Norfolk.

A graduate of the University of Massachusetts with degrees in Sociology and Nursing, Keren is a certified home care executive.

A native of Boston, she has 20 years in Home Care. Along with her husband Benjamin and 5 children, she lives on a large family farm on the Rappahannock River in Essex County Virginia.

Why did you choose Professional Healthcare Resources?

I am VP of the Virginia Association of Homecare. Ron DeCesare, CEO of Professional Healthcare, is also on the board of directors and as such invited me to take this position.

What do you find most rewarding about your role as an Interim Branch Manager?

I have been a Branch manager in a homecare setting for 21 years. The role provides an opportunity to train new personnel as well as keeping several balls in the air at once.

You don't just manage the Richmond Branch; you manage the entire southern Virginia Region. What extra responsibility does that bring?

Managing and training staff with a wide range of experience ranging from Aids to talented and experienced branch managers. The responsibility for the performance and marketing of the entire region. All local marketing personnel report to me.

What attracted you to nursing in the first place and how did you get into homecare?

I was married at 16 and had my first child by 17. Having studied Sociology at college I soon realized that there was no future with that degree. I had always had an interest in medicine but knew I didn't want to be a doctor. I went to nursing school and spent many years in an ICU department in a hospital. After a while I wanted something new and moved into Pediatric homecare where I used my Sociology background as much as my clinical one. I have never looked back.

What is your vision for the Southern region?

I want to continue the awesome job that Betty and the Roanoke team are doing. We must work on stabilizing our staffing. My main vision is to help Professional Healthcare grow and meet its goals in the southern region and you only do that by bringing on phenomenal employees.