

Specific Concerns: How do I arrange for medical services if my parent can't get out of the house easily?

The trend to offer services in a private home setting is on the rise. As people are living longer, there is an apparent attempt within the health care community to offer in-home care and mobile services. As people's needs and preferences change, service offerings are also changing. The privately paying individual is receiving more customized and personally tailored services.

Even visiting physicians and visiting nurse practitioners and Registered Nurses are becoming more common. Services such as mobile footcare, dentistry, massage and other health care services are becoming prevalent.

If funds are limited, it is much more difficult to obtain any sort of social services or medical care in a home setting. The health care industry for moderate, lower and low-income seniors is still based on patients going to a central medical facility.

If a loved one or friend is homebound and in need of medical attention, you may consider seeking help from your area hospital. They may offer a service of sending a social worker to the older adult's home to assess the situation and give recommendations as to a plan of care. If an older adult is at risk of injury or harm, it is best to contact Adult Protective Services to be of urgent assistance.

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Taking an older adult to an emergency room may be overwhelming and overly stressful for an older person. Emergency rooms require a person to wait for long periods of time. People who have true emergency situations are always given priority over people without emergency situations. An emergency room may not be the best answer to your situation, as mental health crises may be viewed as less critical than physical emergencies.

Older adults with dementia do not fair well in emergency room situations. Unless a trauma situation is occurring, an older adult with memory loss or dementia is likely to be given low priority status in an emergency room. ERs are also better equipped to respond to medical issues involving the body and not the mind. Seniors and families are better served by contacting a geriatric specialist or mental health professional trained in working with dementia if an older adult is confused. A senior housing and care referral agency or a private case manager is likely to be of greater help to you than an ER.

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Confusion can come about rapidly due to medication, illness, disease, or infection. Taking a proactive stance to connecting with medical professionals who specialize in mental health is key to being in the care of professionals well versed in mental health, cognitive impairments and memory loss.

If a person is in danger of hurting themselves or others, then the ER is the right place to go.

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