

Community Health Ministry

“Parish Nursing”



-As told by a parish nurse from Columbia St. Mary's Hospital, Milwaukee

Chuck is a 64-year-old Italian male that was born and continues to reside in the Brady street neighborhood of Milwaukee. Even though he has lived here his whole life, he no longer has any family around. For the past year and a half I have gotten to know Chuck through my work at Three Holy Women as a parish nurse. Chuck has a history of high blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes but has not always followed the plan that doctors prescribe for him. He currently does not have any insurance so often does not fill all of his prescriptions because of the cost. He lives in senior housing where he is able to get subsidized rent, as his only income is his social security check. Chuck called me one early afternoon to complain that he had been in the hospital for a stroke but had been just released and was experiencing numbness in his left arm, leg and face. I encouraged him to call 911 but he would not until I came over. I arrived and he was complaining of being dizzy and was unable to stand without assistance because of his dizziness. He was very anxious and wanted to go back to the hospital. We returned to the ER where they readmitted him for continuation of the stroke.

During his hospitalization it became clear that he was not going to be able to take his medication because of his decrease in vision because of the stroke. He was now also on Insulin which he hadn't been on before. I was able to work with the social worker and diabetes nurse to get his insulin down to once per day. With education he did learn to administer his insulin once a day at bedtime. Once he discharged he was sent home with all of his medication but again was not able to read the bottles to see what he was taking. I have been able to set up his medications once per week so that he is able to take them appropriately. He is knowledgeable regarding the types of meds he takes but just not able to read the labels.

He continues to seek out other medical professionals because is not satisfied with his current progress and although he is physically very strong his vision is really the biggest obstacle he has. He is not willing to accept that the brain injury from the stroke is the cause of his vision problems and that glasses will not totally fix the problem. I continue to work with Chuck several times per week to assist with his medication set up and doctors' appointments. There is a social worker in the apartment building in which he lives that is able to help with bill payment and follow up. At this point I will continue my work with Chuck to offer emotional and spiritual support as well in hopes that soon he will be able to accept his current health situation.

For more information on the Community Health Ministry please visit:
www.columbia-stmarys.org