

Comforts of Home

McGregor PACE program offers alternative to residential nursing homes.

“There’s no place like home.”

For many seniors, that phrase is more than just a famous line from the beloved and classic *Wizard of Oz*. The sentiment is a desire of many elderly who wish to stay in their homes as long as possible. McGregor PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) helps qualified seniors in Cuyahoga County do just that and serves as an alternative to residential nursing homes.

Participants enjoy the comfort and security of their familiar homes, neighborhoods and community. Partnering with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Ohio Department of Aging, PACE provides comprehensive medical and social services coordinated through an adult day health center and supplemented by in-home care services.

McGregor PACE is all about partnerships, and a major advantage of enrolling in the program is that it “decreases the fragmentation of care,” according to Cindy Cohen, a PACE nurse practitioner. Statistically, it extends the life of a person in their home up to two years.

“Participants have well checkups at the day centers, and there is also acute care, so if participants don’t feel well, they can still come in the same day. Our labs can draw blood, give fluid IV treatments, treat low level emergencies



and there is even a mini pharmacy, so we can start them on something like an antibiotic right away,” says Cohen.

McGregor PACE is “one-stop shopping” that provides primary care, nursing, day health center meals, physical therapy, occupational therapy, social work, group activities and more.

“No one gives you a real guidebook for caring for your elderly parents. There is no ‘what-to-expect’ that fits everyone. PACE is also a partnership with the participants and their families,” says Cohen. “The success of this program depends on patient-family engagement. I can put together an amazing plan for someone that I think will improve his or her quality of life, but if the participant or the family isn’t buying into it, it’s not as successful. We do this together.”

McGregor PACE CEO Tangi McCoy explains the program helps families by providing participants daily transportation to one of three Cleveland day health centers and also by providing respite for family caregivers who have surgery or vacation plans.

“PACE goes above and beyond normal medical care,” says McCoy. “Sometimes, if a participant is in need of social interaction and finds it difficult to get out of the home, we can build a ramp to get them to the

center. But we do have limited resources for out-of-the-box requests.”

Participant ambassadors who are already PACE members help acclimate new participants, making them feel informed and welcomed, according to Elizabeth Miller, PACE’s director of quality compliance.

Eligibility requirements include a participant to be 55 years of age or older, live in Cuyahoga County, qualify for nursing home level of care and be someone who can live safely in the community. About 95 percent of participants are dual Medicare/Medicaid eligible, but some have Medicaid or Medicare only and some are private pay. According to McCoy, participants give up their Medicaid and/or Medicare benefits once enrolled in PACE. McGregor PACE is reimbursed through state and federal monies.

“One of the reasons I love PACE is because I like a holistic view, and that’s what we do. I like the puzzle that each participant presents. I like coming up with a plan that is not just something we do just because science says we should be doing it. But it is something we can do to engage participants and their families and keep seniors at home.” (mcgregorpace.org) ■