

Generations

Forum attracts leaders in the home-care industry

BY MICHAEL J. AMORUSO

After a hospital stay or short-term rehabilitation, a successful discharge home depends on the coordination of care between the three corners of the home care triangle — the hospital discharge planner, the home-care agency and the elder law attorney.

Without careful coordination, the risks of readmission into the hospital, unsuccessful home-care delivery and legal and financial chaos increase exponentially.

Last month Debbie Matystik, care manager with Senior Bridge, and I co-sponsored Amoruso & Amoruso, L.L.P.'s annual Coordination of Care Forum. The event is designed to educate attendees from leading hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation facilities and home-care agencies, as well as the general public, on the essential elements of smooth transitions in care plans from facilities to the home environment.

Key speakers included United States Congresswoman Nita Lowey and Westchester County Commissioner of Senior Services Mae Carpenter.

The forum provided attendees and participants with much to discuss and addressed many timely issues of interest to Westchester County seniors. Congresswoman Lowey updated participants on the proposed changes to Medicare and Medicaid and the impact on health-care providers and consumers, while Carpenter spoke about the demographics of the Westchester senior community and services offered by the county to enable seniors to thrive in the community.

I outlined the importance of coordinating

early discharge planning with the home-care agency of choice to ensure success at home and emphasized the importance of integrating legal and financial planning to pay for home care as well as the need for advance directives and Medicaid home-care planning. In addition, Matystik spoke about the critical role of care-management services to coordinate care from the facility to the home to prevent readmissions.

Kathryn Griffin and Maria Koroly, M.D. unveiled a new and innovative discharge process implemented by Northern Westchester Hospital as the facility proactively attempts to provide top-tier service and minimize hospital readmissions. This procedure demonstrates the hospital's genuine concern for and commitment to its patients even after they are discharged. Mary Zagajeski, CEO of Dominican Sisters Family Health Services, highlighted the types of home-care options available to consumers and stressed client-centered planning for home safety. Jewish Home Life Care offered a captivating discussion by Bridget Gallagher regarding cutting-edge technology available to assist an individual at home to maintain the highest level of care through electronic monitoring systems. Finally, Ray Hart of UBS Financial Services was on hand to demonstrate the importance of including



Debbie Matystik, from left, Congresswoman Nita Lowey, Mae Carpenter and Michael J. Amoruso participated in the Coordination of Care Forum last month.

long-term care expenses in an investor's retirement plan to prevent a shortfall in retirement funds.

The Coordination of Care Forum demonstrated that a proactive approach to discharge planning, home care and legal planning can collectively reduce the escalating costs of long-term care and prevent needless readmissions. Most people would welcome the opportunity to receive care in their own home; however, it requires planning and coordination. You can hear many of the presenters speak on the topics they shared at the forum by logging onto amorusolaw.com and clicking on the radio show tab link.

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