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No place like home

Avoiding the \$34 billion in annual workplace productivity losses caused by informal caregiving

By: [Victoria Hurley-Schubert](#)

June 15, 2020 12:01 am

No truer words than "There's no place like home" have ever been spoken, especially when someone has been in the hospital for an illness or surgical procedure. Nothing is more comforting than your own bed and coffee from your own mug exactly how you like it.

But what happens upon discharge when a patient needs some help at home? Maybe they aren't quite steady on their feet and are a fall risk or they need assistance with bathing and meal preparation.



After intensive spinal surgery that required months of recovery and rehabilitation, Gerry Patrizio discovered the benefits of professional home care.

"I was a fall risk and needed someone with me at all times," he recalled. "I was recovering at home confined to the first floor of my house. I needed assistance with personal care and getting around. It was a long road to recovery and my wife and children were a huge help, but I needed more care than they could provide. Professional home care played a huge part in my recovery and kept me safe in the comfort of my own house, avoiding the need to stay in a sub-acute care facility post-surgery."

Patrizio had a successful 22-year career in the financial services industry and an MBA in international finance. Going through the experience where he was dependent on others made him refocus his priorities. He became a certified senior advisor and acquired an Assisting Hands Home Care franchise that serves patients in Mercer, Monmouth and Ocean counties in February 2015.

"Pivoting my career and investing in a home care business enabled me to provide valuable services caring for others while helping the health care system save millions of dollars," said Patrizio. "It gives others the freedom of choice I had when it came to managing my post-hospital care."



Gerry Patrizio, president and owner of Assisting Hands Home Care, works with families throughout Mercer, Monmouth and Ocean counties. – ASSISTING HANDS HOME CARE

A professional caregiver, or home care, is still a relatively new concept for many people. Hiring a caregiver allows patients of any age to remain safe at home as they recover from an illness, surgery or simply age in place rather than move to an assisted living facility or nursing home. Caregivers provide one-on-one care for patients that is focused on safety at home, activities of daily living and quality of life. They can assist with activities of daily living that may include bathing, dressing, meal preparation, feeding assistance and light housekeeping to ensure cleanliness. The caregivers also provide assurance for the family that someone is with their loved one, giving an extra set of eyes and ears when they can't be there.

Having a professional caregiver after hospitalization also helps reduce hospital readmissions because they help ensure patients are following treatment plans set forth by doctors and raise the flag when something is not quite right with a patient such as a discomfort, not eating correctly or not sleeping well. This helps reduce hospital readmission penalties and keep health care costs down by bringing a patient problem to light before it becomes an urgent, more complicated issue.

Having a caregiver in the home for the elderly has been proven to save almost \$25 million in hospital costs, according to the Home Care Association of America and Global Coalition on Aging research. Money-saving measures include fall prevention, adequate nutrition and good hygiene just from having someone regularly in the home. Caregivers can also provide doctors and families with valuable information from their consistent interaction with patients that may help to improve diagnosis and treatment.

Home care ensures patient safety in numerous ways from help with day-to-day tasks to having a nurse check in with them throughout their care journey.



Frances Colle of Belmar is evaluated by Stephen Hoelle, director of nursing at Assisting Hands Home Care. – ASSISTING HANDS HOME CARE

they have been lying in bed for many days receiving medications, fighting an infection and out of their normal routines. For most, it is difficult to bounce back from this situation. Professional home care helps make sure the patients get up and moving, reminding them to do exercises and stay on course with prescribed rehabilitation and medication programs."

Hoelle, a board-certified medical-surgical nurse, is in close contact with all of the aides employed at Assisting Hands overseeing every patient.

"What we do is kind of subtle," said Hoelle. "I spend a lot of time working with families to discuss their options to ensure their family members are safe, comfortable and well cared for. We go over services they are eligible for and navigate some of those tough discussions about caring for their loved ones and their capability. We are able to see things that they are not able to, such as a patient is unable to handle preparing meals for themselves or loss of motor function. A lot of times it's tough for families to really see and admit what is going on with their loved one."

Having that outside perspective helps families, especially those where family members may live far away from their loved ones, make informed care decisions.


In addition to providing valuable care for patients, professional caregivers benefit the economy by increasing workforce productivity. Informal caregiving, such as running mom to the doctor, is estimated to amount to \$34 billion in annual productivity losses. These losses include \$6.6 billion in employee turnover, \$6.3 billion in workday adjustments, \$5.1 billion in absenteeism, \$4.8 billion when caregiving requires a change in status from full-time work to part-time. Other workplace fallout includes giving up on a promotion or opportunities, early retirement or loss of benefits.

Professional caregivers are licensed by the New Jersey Board of Nursing after 76 hours of training that is a combination of classroom and clinical training. The Board of Nursing also conducts criminal background checks and the license must be renewed every two years. Caregivers are all bonded and insured when working through an agency.

These professionals are usually employed by agencies who take care of scheduling, additional background checks, training and human resources of employing someone.

*Victoria Hurley-Schubert is director of community relations and communications at **Assisting Hands Home Care**.*

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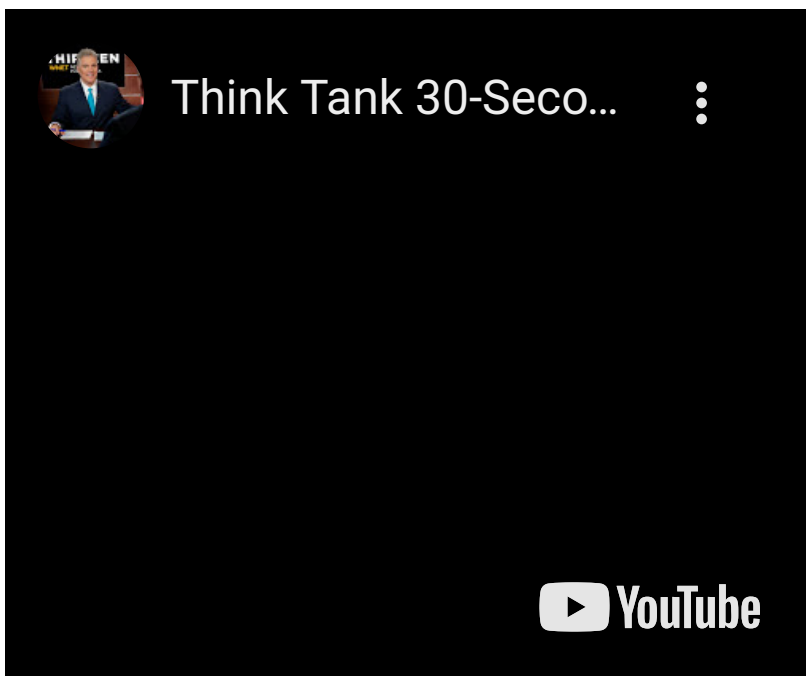
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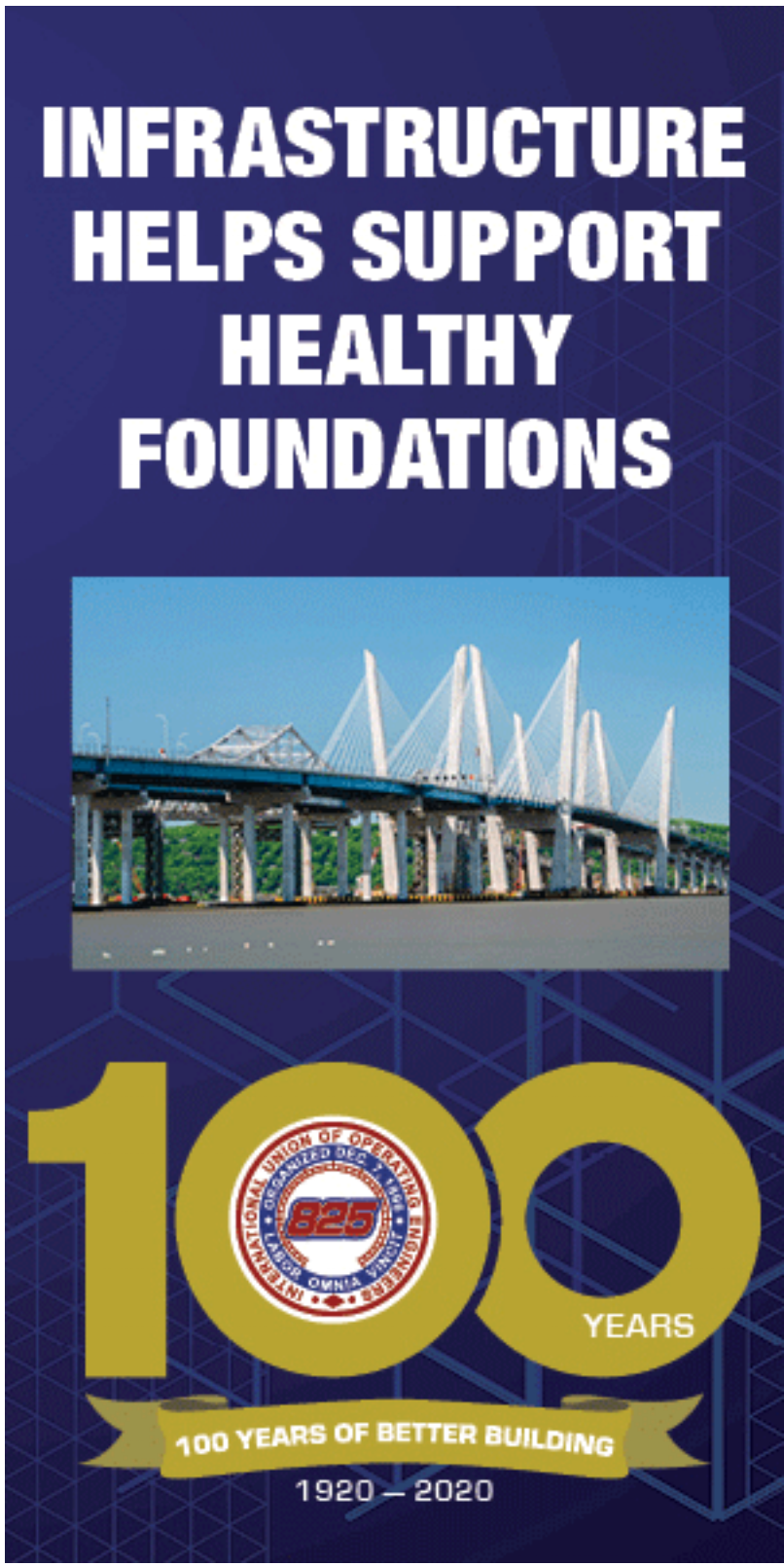
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