

The Dangers of Long-Term Care...It's About Your Family!

Long-Term Care insurance has a place and there are good uses for it. "Some people own it for asset protection, estate preservation or an aversion to welfare. I think you should own Long-Term Care insurance to protect your most precious asset: Your Family," says Dane A. Petchul, Long-Term Care Specialist.

Asset protection - O.K., estate preservation (same thing really), aversion to Welfare-O.K. Protecting your family, **Definitely!**

One should consider the following factors before becoming a caregiver or asking a family member to take over the responsibility.

- 1) Will a family member have the time and financial ability to become a full time or even part time caregiver? Primary caregivers duties can average between 40 to 60 hours a week.
- 2) Will a family member have the physical strength and ability to provide care? Serious back, shoulder and arm injuries are common in caregivers, due to improper transferring techniques or inadequate assistance with transferring.
- 3) Will any family member be emotionally stable and compassionate enough to deal with the intense and unrelenting stress of care giving? High stress levels can be a major factor for caregivers. Elder care abuse, due to high stress, is just as prevalent, if not more so, from family members as it is from paid professionals.
- 4) Is any family member trained to provide the physical necessary care? Inserting catheters and I.V.s, giving shots or administering medicine to a possibly uncooperative dementia sufferer takes training, organization and a discerning eye. So does caring for pressure sores or watching for potentially dangerous changes in health.

5) Will any family member be willing to give up their current lifestyle in order to provide care for you?

Keep this in mind: While providing care can be an enriching and fulfilling experience for some, many caregivers do it out of guilt or a sense of obligation.

Most people do not consider the negative impacts on their social life or physical, mental or emotional health before volunteering to become someone's caregiver.

For instance, more than 1/3 of caregivers experience depression and anxiety. Caregivers tend to forget to or, due to the extent of their duties, cannot sufficiently take care of themselves. Interrupted sleep, less attention to dietary needs, inadequate exercise and physical injuries often afflict caregivers. Increased mental, physical and emotional stress can cause high blood pressure, lowered immune system and coronary problems, just to name a few.

Shockingly, caregivers who have high levels of stress, when compared to non-caregivers, are 63 percent more likely to die within the next 4 years.

When you are considering relying upon family or friends that are "close by", ask yourself this:

Is there a family member that has the dedication and the inclination to do the dirty work?

Are they willing to get you out of bed, bathed, dressed, teeth and hair brushed, fed, toileted and kept comfortable - every day until you die?

Is there a family member or friend who would be willing to be at your beck and call every moment of the day?

Is there someone "close by" who will be willing, or with whom you will be comfortable enough, to wipe your backside after you use the toilet, or to

clean up your poop or urine from the floor and furniture if you have an accident, or to change your diapers or catheter should you become totally incontinent?

Would you even want to put that kind of responsibility and stress on any of your loved ones, if there was another option?

This is the down and dirty, real-world, in-the-trenches care-giving.

So, considering the risk factor that almost half of all Americans will need long term care sometime in their life, every one of us had better take a very good look at what may be in store if we become so challenged... and we had better plan accordingly now while we still can.

It is certainly a lot easier to go into a long term care facility as a paying patient than to have to go broke and accept Medicaid."Yes, it is. Especially if you have a spouse, because your spouse will end up on the raw end of the deal, with no savings to speak of, according to prevailing state law.

Without insurance, all assets must be "spent down" for care before Medicaid can kick in.

The insurance may be expensive, but you may be willing to budget it into your lifestyle today- in other words, bear the cost of buying the insurance - for the promise of tomorrow's security.

The younger you are when you buy long-term care insurance, of course, the less the premiums are This trade-off is the nature of all insurance. Isn't the reason we have insurance is because we love our families.