

Chapter 1

The Art of Caregiving

GOALS

After reading this chapter, you will have the information needed to:

Discuss why caregiving is an art.

Identify three health care settings where you may work.

Describe two types of specialized hospitals.

Describe three things that a nurse assistant may do in a hospital setting.

Describe the type of resident that may be in a nursing home.

Describe three things that a home health aide may do when providing care.

Describe ways in which nurse assistants are similar in all the health care settings.

Key Terms

acute illness: An illness that begins suddenly.

AIDS: an abbreviation for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. AIDS is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which results in a breakdown of the body's defense systems.

art: a skill attained by study, practice or observation.

chronic illness: (KRAHN-ik) a long-lasting condition or illness that may not subside or that may occur again.

client: (KLY-ent) a person who receives health care at home.

general hospital: a facility that provides care for people of all ages and with almost any type of illness or injury.

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA): The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) includes rules covering administrative simplification, including making health care delivery more efficient. It also provided standardization of electronic transmittal of billing and claims information. A key part of the act also increased and standardized confidentiality and security of health data. HIPAA privacy regulations require that access to patient info be limited to only those authorized, and that only the information necessary for a task be available. And finally, that personal health information must be protected and kept confidential.

home health aide: a nurse assistant with additional training who works in home health care.

home health care: health care provided in private homes to people who do not need to stay in hospitals or nursing homes.

home health care agency: A health organization that employs home health aides and others who provide health care and other services to people in their homes.

hospice: (HOS-pis) a program of medical and emotional care and support for people who are dying, as well as for their families.

hospital clinic: a hospital department that provides care to patients who do not need to stay overnight.

inpatient: a patient who must stay overnight in a hospital.

Medicaid: a state-administered federal program that provides health coverage for persons with very low incomes. **Medicare:** a federal health insurance program for persons over age 65 or persons of any age who are disabled or have permanent kidney failure.

monitor: (MON-e-ter) to check regularly for the quality of a person's physical or emotional condition.

nausea: discomfort in throat or chest that often precedes vomiting.

orthopedic: (or-tho-PEE-dik) a type of medicine or care provided for people who have problems with their bones or joints.

outpatient: a patient who receives care in a hospital but does not need to stay overnight.

patient: a person who receives health care in a hospital or an outpatient facility.

personal care assistant: assists elderly or disabled adults with daily living activities at the person's home or in a daytime non-residential facility.

referral process: (re-FER-uhl) a set of procedures that allows one member of the health care system to recommend to other members that a person needs their kind of specialized care.

rehabilitation: (re-huh-bil-e-TAY-shun) the process of regaining physical and emotional health.

resident: (REZ-e-dent) a person who receives health care in a nursing home or long-term facility.

specialized hospital: a facility that provides care for people with only certain types of diseases or illnesses.

subacute care: care provided to residents who are stable and not acutely ill. Usually requires special services such as rehabilitation, ventilator care, wound treatments; usually requires a higher skill level staff than in a traditional nursing facility.

terminal illness: (TER-muh-nul) a serious illness or condition that a person is not expected to survive.

therapeutic: healing, beneficial.

walk-in clinic: a hospital department that provides care for patients without requiring appointments.

You walk into Mrs. Agnes Ryan's room to take her for one of her three daily walks. Mrs. Ryan says she isn't ready to go because she is working on her quilt and wants to finish one more section. You remind her that her walk is important to keep her strong, and then you ask her how long it will take to finish the section of quilting. She says it will take about 10 minutes, so you mentally adjust your schedule and decide to change the bed of Mrs. Ryan's roommate, Mrs. Louise Wang, who is at physical therapy.

As you change the bed, you marvel at how beautifully Mrs. Ryan sews. You ask her how long she has been quilting, and she begins to tell you how her grandmother made quilts. "When my older sister made our dresses," Mrs. Ryan remembers, "she would cut out the pattern and then give the leftover pieces of fabric to my grandmother, who was so happy to receive these scraps of cloth.

CAREGIVING IS AN ART

Caregiving in a health care setting is like *quilt making*. As a caregiver, you make decisions, fit many pieces of work into a day, pay attention to the details of each person's life and use personal strength to handle the many complex parts of your job. You work with patience and devotion while helping ill or disabled people feel comfortable, important and respected. All of us are caregivers at one time or another when we provide important and necessary care to a friend or family member who needs help because of an illness or disability. Being employed as a trained caregiver, however, requires us not only to provide the best care that we can but also to take on additional kinds of responsibilities, such as providing social and emotional support.

It takes a special person to provide quality health care in a caring way. As a nurse assistant, you are a valuable and special caregiver who can make a difference in the lives of people receiving care. You blend your knowledge of people and the accurate performance of skills with your caring spirit. Many people learn the skills of caregiving, but not everyone can deliver those skills with kindness and

Bags of gold would not have made her happier. She loved making quilts.

"Grandmother taught me to cut the fabric into different shapes, sort them by color and shape, and stack them neatly on the table. Then we began to sew them together, one stitch at a time. The tiny pieces took on new shapes, sizes and arrangements of color until we had sewn all the little pieces into one piece large enough to cover a bed. Then Grandmother put thick cotton between the pieced top layer and a bottom sheet, and we stitched the layers together to provide softness and warmth for the lucky person who would sleep beneath this masterpiece. It took lots of practice for me to get it just right. The hardest parts were having enough strength to push the needle through the many layers of fabric and the patience to finish all the tasks. My mother always said that Grandmother sewed the quilts together not with thread, but with love."

compassion. Skillful care provided in a thoughtful way is an **art**.

This chapter explores the art of caregiving and also introduces you to the information that you must know to be a skilled caregiver and to make each person feel that he or she has received a gift—the best care possible. As you prepare for your job—whether you are called a nurse assistant, nursing assistant, nurse aide, home health aide, or geriatric aide you will learn the difference between just getting your job done and providing the quality of care expected from a good nurse assistant. The art of caregiving, the art of treating each person as an individual, makes the difference. Getting to know each person as an individual is the key. Each person receiving care is different, as is each situation. This training provides guidelines to help you make the best decisions to provide the best care to each person.

The art of caregiving focuses on providing care for each person as an individual.

WORKING IN THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Nurse assistants work with a variety of health professionals, such as nurses, physical therapists and dietitians. These health care professionals provide many kinds of health care, depending on the needs of the person receiving care. For example, health care professionals in a hospital clinic provide regular medical checkups to help healthy people stay well and avoid health problems.

Health care professionals in a hospital find and treat problems, such as high blood pressure, before they become serious. Health care professionals cannot cure some health problems, such as diabetes, but they can help people learn to live with them and keep them under control. When people have health problems from which they cannot recover, health care workers strive to make them as comfortable as possible.

People choose health care services depending on where they live, the kind of care they need, and how they will pay for their care. In the United States, people pay for health care in a variety of ways. Some people receive health insurance through government programs like Medicare and Medicaid. Others have insurance coverage through their employment or organizations. Some people may choose to pay for their own personal insurance coverage. There are some individuals that do not have any health insurance because they cannot afford to pay for it.

The health care system has many parts, each with a special function. In some instances, a person may use three parts of the system -- the hospital, a nursing home and home health care -- to meet his or her health care needs. Nurse assistants usually work in one of these health care settings.

WORKING IN A HOSPITAL

When a 72-year-old resident at Morningside Nursing Home woke up in her hospital room after hip surgery, she looked up and saw some strange-looking equipment beside her bed. She felt afraid. She was in pain and wondered how long it would take to get better. She didn't like being in this unfamiliar place. What were those sounds she

heard? She just wanted to be back home. Then someone gently took her hand and said, "Hello, Mrs. Garcia. I'm your nurse assistant. How can I help you feel more comfortable?"

What is Hospital Care?

When Mrs. Garcia needed surgery to repair her broken hip, her doctor admitted her to a hospital. A hospital provides care for people who have major illnesses, become sick or injured suddenly, require surgery or need tests to find out whether they have an illness or disease. To keep serious illnesses from occurring, hospital clinics promote wellness through health maintenance and health education. When Mrs. Garcia receives care in the hospital, she is called a **patient**. Part of your job as a nurse assistant is to help patients feel comfortable, as well as to assist nurses and other members of the health care team in providing care for patients.

You will have many opportunities to comfort and reassure the people in your care.

People who stay overnight in a hospital receive inpatient care. Not all hospital patients stay overnight, however. Some people have regular doctor appointments at a **hospital clinic**. For example, at a **walk-in clinic**, people can come in without an appointment. They may also go to a clinic to see another health professional, such as a physical therapist, speech therapist or dietitian. A hospital may also have a surgery clinic, where people go for same-day surgical procedures that do not require them to stay overnight. Individuals visiting hospital clinics receive **outpatient** care.

Two major types of hospitals are **specialized hospitals** and general hospitals. A specialized hospital provides services for only one type of health care need. A children's or pediatric hospital is an example of a specialized hospital. Look at Table 1-1, which lists several types of specialized hospitals and the care each provides.

A **general hospital** usually provides care for patients of all ages and with almost any type of

illness or injury. It also provides outpatient care, surgical services, emergency care services, health education classes and testing procedures to identify illnesses.

Most general hospitals provide this wide variety of care through individual departments, which help their staffs to focus primarily on one type of patient or illness. This focus allows staff members to become experts in providing specialized care. In fact, even with one single need, a patient may

encounter several types of caretakers. For example, when Mrs. Garcia broke her hip, she was admitted in the emergency room. The staff then moved her to the operating room, where the surgeon fixed her hip. Finally, she woke up in the **orthopedic** unit.

Table 1-1 Examples of Specialized Hospitals

Type of Hospital	Service and Care Provided for...
Obstetric	Pregnant women and those with newborn babies; women with diseases of the reproductive system
Orthopedic	People with broken bones; people with diseases of bones or joints
Pediatric	Children with illnesses or injuries
Psychiatric	People with mental or emotional problems

What is it Like to Work in a Hospital?

Working in a hospital can be exciting, since it is an intense place, full of vigorous activity. Because most patients do not stay a long time, the people in your care may change fairly often. Patients may have fairly serious illnesses or injuries. Being cared for in a hospital is very expensive, so patients usually are discharged to their own homes or to nursing homes as soon as they no longer require the kind of care a hospital provides.

A hospital can be a difficult place in which to create comfortable, familiar surroundings. Often there is not much space for personal items, and patients are encouraged to leave anything of value at home. Sometimes, for health reasons, even flowers are not permitted. For example, a person with **nausea** may not be able to tolerate strong smells.

Most hospitals have some single rooms, but patients usually share a room with one or more people. Team members can pull curtains around a space so that others cannot see the patient, but it is hard to keep conversations private. Hospitals permit all but the most seriously ill people to have visitors. The number of visitors and visiting hours may be limited so that patients can receive the care and rest they need. The hospitals may also have

rules regarding the ages of visitors who come to the hospital.

For all these reasons, a nurse assistant working in a hospital must have a special ability to form effective relationships quickly with people who are under stress. You become an important person for patients who may be afraid of having surgery or tests or who may be in pain. Family or friends may not be around when the patient needs comfort and support. Things happen quickly in a hospital, and patients ask many questions that they may not have had a chance to ask other members of the health care team. Perhaps something was explained to them, but they do not remember what they heard or do not understand. Family members and friends may have similar concerns, and other members of the health care team may not be available to talk with them during visiting hours. It is important for you to tell your supervising nurse about any questions and concerns the patient or the patient's family may discuss with you. Information concerning a patient's condition is limited to only those authorized to know.

As a nurse assistant in a hospital, you are a vital member of the health care team. You may provide basic nursing care under the supervision of a licensed nurse, or you may assist the nursing staff in a certain department by transporting patients to

and from the department or helping with examinations. Some of these departments you work in might include obstetrics, pediatrics, orthopedics and surgical (Table 1-2).

treated as a **person**, not as an illness. The compassionate care you provide can make a difference in how a patient feels about his or her time in the hospital.

Remember that whatever department you are assigned to, each patient is unique and should be

Table 1-2 Examples of Departments in a General Hospital

Department	Service and Care Provided for...
Medical	Patients who need medical care
Surgical	Patients who need surgery
Cardiology	Patients with heart diseases
Clinic	Patients who need medical care but who do not need to stay overnight at the hospital
Emergency	People with emergency medical needs
Intensive Care Unit	Patients with life-threatening illnesses or conditions
Nursery	Newborn babies
Obstetric	Pregnant women and newborn babies
Oncology	Patients with cancer
Operating Room	Patients who undergo surgery
Orthopedic	Patients with bone and joint problems
Pediatric	Children up to 18 years of age
Psychiatric/mental health	Patients with mental or emotional problems

WORKING IN LONG-TERM CARE

On a sunny day in March, you help Mrs. Garcia pack the small suitcase her children have brought to the hospital. She is feeling much better, and her

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hip is getting stronger since she has started the exercises recommended by the physical therapist. Still, she needs more care before she can return home, so she is going to continue her recovery at a nursing home. As she prepares to go to

Morningside Nursing Home, Mrs. Garcia has many questions: "Who else lives in the home? Will I make friends? What will I do with my time? Will the nurses be nice to me? Will I get the kind of treatment I need? Will they treat me with respect?" Her children also have questions: "Will we be able to visit? Will they take good care of Mother?"

What is a Nursing Home?

A nursing home or nursing facility, which are the most frequently used terms, is a place where long-term care is provided for people who need regular or continuous skilled care. People may also receive long-term care in assisted-living communities, group homes and residential care facilities (Box 1-1). A person who receives care in a nursing facility is called a **resident**. The average stay for a person in a nursing home is 7 months to 2 years.

Showing a new resident around and introducing her to other residents and staff help her to feel at home.

Some people may stay in a nursing home for a few days or for a few weeks to regain their physical and emotional health through **rehabilitation**. Residents in nursing facilities can be categorized by how long they stay in the facility. Short-term residents are those who leave the facility in 3 to 6 months. They tend to be younger and may be admitted from a hospital. The increase in **subacute care** units in

nursing facilities has also added to the increase in short-term residents. Long-term residents stay in the facility for 6 months or more. As a nurse assistant, you work with the health care team to provide daily care and help residents live as fully and independently as possible.

What is it Like to Work in a Nursing Home?

Working in a nursing home can be both challenging and rewarding. You have the same responsibility that all nurse assistants have to provide basic nursing care. In addition, you do certain things that are specific to working in a nursing home. For example, one of the most important needs of residents is talking with other people. Often nursing home residents do not have family members nearby who can come to visit regularly. You can fill some of their needs by talking with them and encouraging them to talk with one another and to get involved in activities. Most people like to be asked about their lives, accomplishments and families. Try and remember these events in their lives so that at a later date the information can be used in a **therapeutic** manner as you work with the nursing home resident.

In many instances, the nursing home setting may be your first introduction to caregiving. You may have challenges because you may have to work long hours. But you will find that the work you do is highly valued by the resident, the family and nursing staff.

BOX 1-1 Other Terms for Nursing Home

Assisted-living community	Long-term care center
Care center	Nursing center
Convalescent center	Nursing facility
Geriatric center	Nursing and rehabilitative treatment center
Group home	Rehabilitation center
Health center	Residential care facility
Health care center	Skilled care center

WORKING IN HOME HEALTH CARE

The Move to Home Health Care

After Mrs. Garcia receives physical therapy and other rehabilitative care at the nursing home, her doctor decides that her walking has improved and that she can go home. However, he also decides that she will still need some assistance, so he refers her to a home health care agency. The **referral process** allows one member of the health care system to let other members know that a person requires their kind of specialized care.

Although the doctor or nurse typically makes a home health care referral, anyone in the community can call a home health care agency and ask for services. The home health care agency evaluates each case to see whether they can provide services.

Clients pay for home health care in a number of different ways: through Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance and private pay. Rules and regulations govern how each of these methods of payment covers the cost. Because these rules differ from agency to agency, a client should check with a local home health care agency for the rules that apply in his or her state.

Mrs. Garcia is happy to be back at home. She likes sleeping in her own bed and enjoys being alone. She gets in and out of bed by herself, fixes her own simple meals and even manages to get dressed by herself. But Mrs. Garcia needs help with bathing, changing the bed linens and shopping for groceries. She also needs help with doing the exercises recommended by the physical therapist. The **home health aide** visits with Mrs. Garcia twice each week to help her with these tasks.

By helping clients with their exercises, the home health aide is helping them reach their goal of living independently.

What is Home Health Care?

A **home health care agency** provides health care services to people in their homes so that they safely get the care they need, while feeling secure within their own homes and with their families. When Mrs. Garcia receives home health care, she is called a **client**. Typically, clients receive home

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health care from a registered nurse, who **monitors** their health and plans their care, and from a home health aide, who helps them with their daily care.

For many years people were afraid to go to the hospital. They thought that they would get better care at home. As time went on, it became more common for people who were very sick to get health care in a hospital. Today, **home health care** is again popular because it encourages people to receive individualized care in their own homes, and it does not cost as much as hospital care.

Two purposes of home health care are to help people get better and to promote independence of clients in the comfort of their homes. A client with a **chronic illness** may choose to be cared for at home. A client with a **terminal illness** is not expected to recover and may also use home health care. Many elderly people require some assistance because they are frail and not able to do certain things for themselves.

Home health aides receive training similar to that of nurse assistants and provide the same basic nursing care. Sometimes home health care workers teach family members or friends to provide care for their loved ones at home.

Clients receiving home health care can be young or old, male or female, and of any race, religion or ethnic background. They all have special medical problems that require different kinds of care in their homes to maintain or recover their health. People who require home health care want to know that they will receive good care. To guarantee that people receive a certain level of care, federal and state governments established standards for staffing and operation that all home health agencies must meet. In 1987, these new home health requirements, which state that home health agencies are responsible for providing good care to their clients, became effective. When working in home health care, you hear people talking about these "OBRA" requirements. You will learn more about OBRA requirements in the next chapter.

What is it like to work as a Home Health Aide?

To be a good home health aide, you must be professional and mature. Home health aides often work alone, but their duties and responsibilities are clearly outlined in the job description. Because

home health aides fill a very important need, they also have special training needs that include home management and home safety, as well as food planning and preparation. The law requires that they be tested by their employer to make sure they are qualified. Depending on your client's needs, your responsibilities will include providing personal care, such as bathing and grooming, and making sure your client is safe. Some clients may need help cooking a meal. Other clients may have to be reminded to take their medications. Finally, you will carefully document all your activities and observations.

Because a home health aide often works alone providing care to the client, she must carefully document her activities and observations.

All nurse assistants deal with families, but in the home health care setting you talk with household members in their own environments. Sometimes you may find working in their homes to be a warm and rewarding experience. At other times you may not like how some people behave. You may be exposed to values that are different from your own.

If your client's home is a caring and safe place, it will probably be a pleasant setting for caregiving. However, some people may not keep their homes as clean as you keep your own. You may also observe or suspect alcohol abuse, drug abuse, physical abuse or illegal activity while you are providing care in the home. You should report any concerns you have about your client's well-being to your supervising nurse, who will help you decide what to do.

THE ROLE OF A PERSONAL CARE ASSISTANT

A caregiver is sometimes referred to as a **personal care assistant** or informal caregiver. This person assists elderly or disabled adults with daily living activities at the person's home or in a daytime non-residential facility. Duties performed at a place of residence may include:

- keeping house (making beds, doing laundry, washing dishes) and preparing meals.
- providing meals and supervised activities at non-residential care facilities.
- advising families, the elderly and disabled on such things as nutrition, cleanliness and household utilities.

USING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Many services are available in the community to help people get well, help them learn to adapt to their illnesses or offer emotional support. Some organizations provide information about particular illnesses or conditions, such as cancer, diabetes or cystic fibrosis. Others offer community lectures and support groups for people with specific needs. Some community services offer rides to and from doctors' appointments, deliver meals to people's homes and provide childcare. Check with your supervising nurse or the social worker if you think someone in your care would benefit from one of these community services. In addition, **AIDS** service organizations and **hospice** offer special care and sometimes offer special training programs for nurse assistants and home health aides