

March 12, 2021

To the Family Members of our Residents at Garvey Manor and Our Lady of the Alleghenies,

March is flying by and much has been going on in this past week since my last update.

We are changing our primary Pharmacy provider and Consultant Pharmacist from UPMC RX Partners Mt. City Home Pharmacy to Thompson Pharmacy of Altoona, effective in April, 2021.

We should have seamless service through the transition. If your family member is currently with UPMC RX Partners, information from our current records for pharmacy service and billing will be transferred and bills will be generated from Thompson Pharmacy, Chestnut Avenue, Altoona. Residents in Our Lady of the Alleghenies Residence who currently use other pharmacies will continue with their same pharmacy of record.

On Monday, March 15, 2021, we are having another Covid Vaccine clinic for new residents and those residents who wish to be vaccinated, but were not included in our first three clinics. We will also offer the vaccine to new staff members or those who wish to be vaccinated but were not in the first three clinics. We know the protection the vaccines are affording us are allowing us to remain Covid free at this time and will hopefully protect us from any major outbreaks moving forward. We encourage residents, staff and you, as residents' family members, to be vaccinated when you are able. During employee testing this week no positive cases were identified.

It was one year ago this weekend that we were mandated to close the facility to visitors and to implement rigid infection control measures. We have all been through a lot during this past year, with the residents experiencing the greatest loss in not being able to have open visiting. We know this has been emotionally hard for all of you too. Now, as the virus outbreaks have somewhat subsided and the effect of the vaccine is positively impacting the spread, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has published new guidance for the general public relaxing many travel restrictions and is giving recommendations regarding people gathering socially in small groups and businesses re-opening. **WE MUST REMAIN VIGILANT TO AVOID SPREAD!**

We, as a long term care facility, are obligated to follow the directive of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS of the Federal Government) and the Pennsylvania Department of Health relating to all things Covid. Our regulations are not the same as those put out by the CDC for the general public. CMS just issued revised guidance for Nursing Home Visitation. The full document is available at the Department of Health and Human Services Ref: QSO-20-39-NH, originally published September 17, 2020, revised 03/10/2021.

The goal remains to keep Covid out of the long term care facilities, to protect the vulnerable elderly in group setting from an outbreak and to enforce strong infection control measures geared

to those goals. In keeping with the revised visiting guidance and within our infection control parameters, we want to do all we can to foster meaningful visits for you and your loved ones. The following are highlights included in our revised visiting protocols:

- The goal is to provide person-centered, safe and meaningful visits between residents and their families within the parameters of our abilities and the applicable regulatory guidance.
- Core Principles of Covid-19 Infection Prevention must still be followed including –
 - Detect possible or positive cases before they become an outbreak and contain any outbreak that may occur.
 - Screen all visitors/staff who enter facility for indication of potential Covid infection or exposure (elevated temp, physical signs/symptoms, high risk exposure factors, active Covid disease or Covid contact within prior 14 days). Prevent entry to those with positive indicators.
 - Hand Hygiene (alcohol based hand rub) for all who enter and frequently after touching anything that is a potential exposure, touching high touch areas and touching other people.
 - Face covering (Mask covering nose and mouth) at all times
 - Clean and disinfect high-frequency touched surfaces and surfaces in designated visitation sites.
 - Decrease the risk of transmission when necessary through use of physical barriers, adequate physical space.
 - Staff/residents/visitors use appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
 - Effectively cohort residents (separate dedicated areas for Covid care / suspicion).
 - Resident and staff testing as required.
 - Visitors who are unable to adhere to the core principles of Covid-19 infection prevention should not be permitted to visit or should be asked to leave. (reference page two of the Guidance by CMS QSO-20039-NH).
- Visitation should be person-centered considering each resident's physical, mental and psychological well-being and to support their quality of life. Consideration for a degree of privacy during visit. Visits in designated neutral visitation spaces or in resident's room.
- Even when residents and visitors are fully vaccinated, outdoor visiting is preferred as it generally poses a lower risk due to increased space and air flow. When practical visits will be held outside, considering weather and resident's health status.
- Ordinarily no more than two visitors per resident per visit.
- Visits will not occur if there is a high risk of Covid transmission
 - For Unvaccinated residents if the county positivity rate is above 10% and less than 70% of the facility' residents are fully vaccinated.
 - For residents with Covid-19 infection (vaccinated or unvaccinated) until transmission-based precautions are discontinued.
 - Resident is in quarantine (vaccinated or unvaccinated) until they are released from quarantine based on the established criteria for the quarantine.

- If visitor is identified as high risk for transmission to / potential exposure of resident.
- Visits will be scheduled at specific times with consideration being given to our ability to safely maintain the core infection prevention principles, the flow of visitors and residents through the facility and depending on other activities occurring within the facility that require staff time and attention for residents' engagement and care.
 - Limited number of visitors in the facility at a time with limited number of visitors on any given unit. Limited to no more than two visitors per resident per visit.
 - Limited length of visit (maximum 1 hour)
 - Ordinarily no visitors during meal times or other times when residents are gathered in a congregate setting such dining rooms or other locations for group activity.
 - Once screened, visitors must proceed directly to visitation place (designated area or resident's room) and not circulate throughout the facility or interact with other staff, residents, or visitors in the facility. Maintain physical distance (6 feet) from others.
 - When the visit is over, the visitors must leave the visitation place and proceed directly to the designated exit, without circulating through the facility or interacting with other visitors, staff or residents in the facility.
 - Special arrangement will be made if a resident shares a room so that only one resident is present for the visit. The visit will take place in a location other than resident's room unless roommate is out of the room for the duration of the visit.
 - Core Principal of social distance (6 feet apart) should be maintained during the visit and masking by resident (if possible) and visitor (required) should be maintained for the duration of the visit and the whole time the visitor is in the facility.
 - We ask visitors in the nursing home to use yellow folding chairs in rooms for visits so that they can be easily disinfected after use.
 - Visitors should not bring items with them for residents. Items for residents should still be placed in the white canopy at the loading dock, labeled for the resident.
 - If resident is fully vaccinated, the resident, while wearing a well-fitting face mask, can choose to have close contact, (including touch) with their visitor. Hand hygiene must be performed before and after touching (hug or hand holding).
- While NOT required as a condition for visiting, we strong recommend the visitors receive the Covid-19 vaccine to protect themselves, the resident, our staff and the general public from potential exposure and contracting the disease.
- Should an outbreak of Covid occur in the facility (among staff or resident), altered circumstances for visiting will prevail based on our regulatory guidance and capabilities to safely allow visits. This may mean that in person visits are cancelled.

Though the length of this guidance may seem overwhelming, we are following the directives given to us and setting protocols to safely host your visits. We know how important this is for you and the residents and we want to do all we can to facilitate in person visits that are enjoyable

and meaningful. Please continue to use the same system to schedule your visits, calling the Activities Department for residents in the nursing home and Michelle Bookhammer for resident in Our Lady of the Alleghenies (814 695-5571). The same visitation times will continue to be used as were given in the update last week.

We look forward to welcoming many of you back for in house visits after this long hiatus. We pray that we can foster visits that allow you to personally engage with your loved one in a meaningful way. We know having not been in the facility or resident's rooms for over a year, you will see some changes and may feel the need to rearrange items in rooms, organize the closet or re-decorate. We ask you to not do so at this time but spend your time personally engaging with your loved one. We also ask for your patience and consideration of the fact that we must have staff available to implement the steps required for the visits, and we must also continue to use our staff for resident routine care and services, group activities, time to assist residents with virtual visits and as weather permits, assist residents to go outside.

The Visitation Plan depends on our ability to remain Covid free and should an outbreak occur, to contain it as efficiently as possible. We also must monitor the Blair County positivity rate for the rate of community spread that can increase our risk. The Positivity rate this week is 3.1%

God bless you. Sr. Joachim Anne