**Community Caregivers**

**Albany Medical College Division of Community Outreach and Medical Education**

**Program Description:**

The Center for Disease Control defines aging in place as "the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level." Often it is a slow, and initially undetected, decline in health that leads to a loss of independence. The causes are many, be it:

- a fall due to an unsafe home environment (poor lighting, slippery floor surfaces, lack of grab-bars)

- a worsening medical condition due to delayed/postponed doctor's visits, or

- general decline due to a decreased ability for self-care.

In the end, almost all of these may result in a hospitalization with decreased hope for future independent living. It is important to note that these factors may also impact on individuals that have physical disabilities in addition to those with chronic physical and psychiatric illnesses as well. This program’s goal is to reduce the impact of some of these factors on community members.

To address these issues, Albany Medical College Division of Community Outreach and Medical Education partners with Community Caregivers - a community based group which provides non-medical services that enable individuals of all ages to maintain their independence, dignity and quality of life within their homes and communities. Typical volunteer activities are in the scope of:

* Visitation
* Respite for caregivers
* Shopping from a list
* Prescription pickup
* Telephone assurance
* Assistance with paperwork
* Light housekeeping/chores
* Meal preparation / delivery

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, student activities were limited to regular assurance calls, assistance in connecting with community resources, writing relevant newsletter and newspaper articles, and leading virtual workshops and discussion groups. As restrictions are lifted additional typical activities noted above will be restarted.

**Learning Objectives:**

1.  Recognize the differences and understand the importance of a patient’s belief system, values, language, religion, and health practices that impact care for a culturally diverse population.

2. Analyze the factors that may serve as obstacles to the patient’s health maintenance and the treatment of disease.

3. Detail an approach to patients with chronic disease that recognizes the patient’s life situation and elements of disease control.

4. Demonstrate interpersonal skills that serve as the building blocks for the patient doctor relationship.

5. Demonstrate empathetic, respectful and non-judgmental approaches to patient care.

6. Collaborate with patients, families and medical care teams.

**Time Commitment**:

Minimum of one Community Caregivers activity per month (minimum length 2 hours)

**Training:**

Community Caregivers Orientation (1 hour)and Patient Intake visit shadowing

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