



Conversation with SeniorHomes.com – Senior Care Corner Show Transcript

Barry: Welcome to the Senior Care Corner Show. I'm Barry.

Kathy: And I'm Kathy. Thanks for joining us.

Barry: You'll find us at SeniorCareCorner.com with solutions, tools and information for family caregivers and others who care for and about senior adults.

Well Kathy, I think we've got another interesting feature segment today talking about a new and somewhat different resource for family caregivers, something different from what we've discussed before but I think people will find it interesting.

Before we get to that though, I believe you've got some news items or us?

Kathy: I do! I have found several interesting items for caregivers today. Our first news item:

One In Five Americans Report Visiting Emergency Room At Least Once In the Past Year

Data from the CDC's 36th annual comprehensive report on American's health shows that in 2011, 20% of US adults reported at least one emergency room visit in the past year and 7% reported two or more visits.

The report includes a compilation of health data from state and federal health agencies as well as the private sector.

From 2001-2011 both children and adults aged 18-64 with Medicaid coverage were more likely than uninsured Americans and those with private insurance to have at least one ER visit.

In adults, injuries were the most common reason for visits.

35% of ER visits included an X-ray.

16% of people in the ER were admitted to the hospital.

59 % of ER visits included at least one drug prescribed at the time of discharge.

It was found during ER visits, that 48% of adults did not meet the federal physical activity guidelines.

Barry: Well, that's interesting. I didn't realize it was that prevalent. Clearly it is.

Kathy: It is, especially for older adults. Our next news item:

New Survey of Aging Experts Gives Top 5 Tips for Avoiding Family Feud When Caring for Aging Parents

The National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers released the results of a survey of geriatric care managers across the country. The question: what are tips on how to avoid a major family feud when dealing with the sensitive issue of caring for your aging parent?

The top 5 tips identified by these aging experts were:

1. Give each family member opportunity to voice their concerns, questions and ideas.
2. Hold a family meeting to plan for emergencies or the future. Use a facilitator if needed.
3. Identify areas of agreement and disagreement among family members.
4. Keep the lines of communication open.
5. Identify the roles of each family member and how they'll play that role.

Geriatric care managers work with older adults and their families. They're professionals with extensive training and experience helping those people who need assistance to navigate caregiving issues.

May is National Geriatric Care Managers month and this study was conducted in an effort to educate the public about issues facing older adults and family caregivers.

Barry: It's nice to have all those rules. I know they have similar rules for business meetings. Somehow they don't seem to work there as well, especially in times when emotions can carry people beyond what they know they have as far as constraints. But I think it's just whatever works for each family.

Kathy: Right, but it is a place to start your focus to help get everyone talking. I think they're helpful ideas. Our third news item today:

Sleep Apnea in Seniors Tied to Alzheimer's in a Study

A new small study has raised the possibility that sleep apnea may somehow cause or be caused by Alzheimer's disease.

Sleep apnea is the condition that robs sufferers of deep sleep by subconsciously and endlessly waking them up and is thought to be more common as we age.

The research is only preliminary but scientists found that slimmer seniors with signs of disrupted breathing during sleep were more likely to have indicators of developing Alzheimer's disease.

The connection deserves further study since there may be a link between sleep, aging and memory according to the lead author in the study. Sleep is important for memory and sleep patterns change as we age.

Often people with sleep apnea don't know they have it. They have trouble staying in deep sleep because their throats close blocking their airway which causes them to subconsciously wake up. They may awaken 35 or more times an hour.

In the study seniors with average age of 71 were tested. A quarter had symptoms of breathing problems during sleep without concentration problems. The thinner participants with breathing problems during sleep were more likely to have signs of an increased likelihood of developing Alzheimer's.

Although excess weight is a risk of sleep apnea, those participants who were obese with breathing problems didn't appear to have as much of an extra risk of Alzheimer's and may have a slightly lower risk.

More investigation is needed to determine cause and effect and subjects will need to be studied over time to gauge the actual development of Alzheimer's versus a risk.

Barry: It would be good to see other studies and find out if there are similar results,

Kathy: Our final news item today:

Seniors More Likely to Crash When Driving With Pets

In a recent study, researchers found that elderly people who always drive with a pet in the car are far more likely to crash than those who never drive with a pet.

It's true that animals make great companions for seniors.

The study included 2,000 licensed drivers over 70. Those with pets were asked how often they drove with their pet in the car.

The crash risk was twice as high for those who always drove with their pets compared to those who never drove with them. Crash rates for those who sometimes or rarely drove with pets were about the same as the rates among those who didn't own pets.

Taking the pet along for a ride was a fairly common practice among the elderly pet owners with more than half acknowledging that they took their pet with them in the car occasionally. Pets usually rode on the front passenger seat or in the back seat.

The researchers found it interesting that 83% of those surveyed agreed that an unrestrained dog was likely dangerous in a moving vehicle yet only 16 % have ever used any type of a restraint on their own pet.

The presence of pets in a vehicle acting as a potential internal distraction for elderly drivers has never been studied before. Not only this but other driving habits that may increase the crash rate in elderly drivers would benefit from awareness.

There is no direct evidence that driving with pets create a public health threat but there is research on the effects of other distracted driving behaviors such as texting, eating, or interacting with other passengers and media reports of crashes caused by people with pets in the vehicle to feel it is an important topic.

Barry: Well that makes a lot of sense there. Certainly distracted driving, it's one thing to be eating, it's another to thing to have a pet moving around there and simply distracting your eye, even when you're not otherwise paying attention to it.

Kathy: Right, or jumping in your lap when you're trying to drive.

Barry: Laughs. Well thanks Kathy; those were some great news items.

Want to turn now to our feature segment, regular visitors to Senior Care Corner and listeners to our show know we like to provide family caregivers information about a lot of resources for seniors and caregivers.

We look for and discuss resources that help seniors directly with the idea that family members can link up their senior loved ones with those resources, whether a suggestion, gifts or through other avenues. We also look for resources that can help family caregivers with the care they provide. Sometimes it's tools and techniques that help them in what they do for those under their care whether those senior loved ones are in the same home, same town or a long distance away.

From time to time, we have a resource that helps the caregivers in caring for themselves so they are at their best when providing care to loved ones. This time we've got a resource we encountered that simply intrigued us. We know from our own research how hard it can be to find information on care facilities. And even when you do it can be hard to compare what you find out about several facilities to know which would be best to meeting the needs of senior loved ones. That's why we found seniorhomes.com to be interesting because they are not only doing the leg work for us but now going one step further in performing comparisons and determining which facilities do the best job of providing care.

We were fortunate to get a few minutes of time with Chris Rodde, one of the co-founders and CEO of seniorhomes.com and getting him to talk to us about what they do and what

a visitor to their site can expect to find. Chris' direct responsibilities at seniorhomes.com include product development and their care advisor team. So we're going right to the source to learn about what they have to offer.

Here's our conversation with Chris Rodde, which we recorded a few days ago.

Begin Recording

Chris, welcome to Senior Care Corner.

Chris: Thank you, thank you.

Barry: Well you've got a big announcement that you folks made earlier this month that we'd really like to hear about but first we're interested in learning what really is seniorhomes.com?

Chris: So seniorhomes.com, we help people find assisted living, living care and independent living. We do that through our website, seniorhomes.com, and also we have an 800 number that people can call to talk to a care advisor for free for those people who would rather, that have questions about the process or would rather really talk to an expert.

Barry: Now looking at your site, I mean it's a very informative site, but I have to ask; what drove that? Why seniorhomes.com?

Chris: So we saw a real need in the marketplace for a need for to help people that are looking for senior living. There is, you know at the time we've been in this business four years now and when we first looked into this there really wasn't much information on the internet about senior living. And certainly there weren't, there were a lot of sites but there weren't sites with really high quality content that, you know, were really sort of trustworthy sites. We saw an opportunity and decided to go for it.

Barry: Well we agree. Because you look around information is scattered out there, it's piecemeal and it's like you said, the quality of a lot of it is questionable.

Kathy: So Chris, let's make sure that we let everyone know at Senior Homes, you cover assisted living, independent living, retirement memory care; a wide range of different kinds of housing situations. Not just assisted living, correct?

Chris: That's right, yup! That's right. Yeah we, I mean we; the term we use broadly is "senior living" and you know it does, it captures assisted living and you know memory care is something that we do and as well independent living is something that we can help people with. Those are the main categories. A lot of people will call these places "retirement communities" there are a lot of different terms people use to, you know, describe the type of living arrangement that they're going for.

Kathy: Right and you're giving information on a wide variety of things, not just nursing home compare. You go a little bit more in depth with some of the information that you use to recommend these living facilities, correct?

Chris: Yeah, we have a lot of information about the communities across the country. We have a database of around a 110,000 different locations of different, you know, types and that includes, that does include the categories I've mentioned, but also includes nursing homes as well as what we call "care homes" which are the smallest operators out there. I like to call them the bed and breakfasts of senior living because it's often somebody who, you know, has converted their homes to bring seniors in.

Barry: Well, in looking at information and you said, you talk about and have information about a large number of facilities and of course you can find a lot of information on the web; but one of the things that we found wanting when looking out there is something that you've addressed. There's really no way to effectively compare facilities and it sounds like you've come up with a way to do that and got something released. Would you like to talk about that?

Chris: Yeah, sure. We saw, after having done this for three or four years, we talked to many, many caregivers and you know everyone is looking for information about, to help them decide; you know if there might be ten communities in my, near the location that I'm looking and you know people really want to know which are the best three or four that are the best that I really should go tour? And then which are the three or four that I should totally avoid because they have a terrible track record, because some homes do?

So we saw that need in you know, day to day conversation and people are asking us are there any ratings and so that's when we decided or came onto the idea of launching a national ratings system for senior living. So what we announced just recently is that we had launched that national rating system and what that ratings system is that it's a simple ten point scale that has a lot of heavy math and a lot of data we've collected that goes into that number and that number is really meant to help people choose which communities they should go look at.

Barry: Well what would differentiate a highly rated community from one at the bottom of the list?

Chris: Well, that's a great question. We are; we're just starting to learn that. We have in three markets announced, you know who are top rated communities are; we've also in those three metropolitan markets discovered which communities are not doing so well. And the, a couple things stand out in terms of differentiations. The most, in terms of the homes that have done poorly in our ratings; there's two things we've heard kind of resoundingly. Number one is these are homes that have a lot of turnover; that have management problems. There's a lot of turnover in ownership from, with these homes;

there's a lot of acquisitions going on and so some homes are more prone to that. That often disrupts things and it's the personnel, and the turnover of personnel, the changing of the guard in some of these communities that often leads to them not operating quite as well.

So that's one thing that we've heard back, another thing that that has helped us determine which homes you know on the homes that you want to avoid it's you know every almost every state has inspection reports, and those have really been helpful enough—with us, for us in determining how to rate the communities. So we leverage the data from the state to see which homes just haven't done a good job of meeting the expectations of the state.

Barry: So there's a lot of homework behind those ratings?

Chris: There is yeah. It's, it's we done a lot of, a LOT of research, gathered a lot of data to pull that together.

Kathy: So choosing a few of your top rated or even your highest rated facility, to go and look at and do all your due diligence even though they are listed in this report. We just still want everyone is going and looking, this is just a starting point with great information.

Chris: That's right. That's exactly right. I mean we see our role, even before we launched the ratings, we see our role as helping people get started. You know what we recommend to consumers that are looking for the senior home is to go out and tour three or four of them because that's really the best way to understand whether a place is going to be a good fit or not. And that's where, that's where our ratings really help because it helps you narrow down those many options you might be facing to understand which ones you should be really focusing on.

Barry: That's a great tool you provide folks. You know you really don't want to cover everything in an area especially in a big metropolitan area like those you rolled out for the initial set of ratings so being able to establish a short list based on some objective criteria would really help a family looking for, looking for a place for senior loved ones.

Chris: Yup, yeah.

Kathy: So Chris you started with your pilot cities and moved onto the West Coast and you're moving forward. Can you give us a little detail about timelines perhaps?

Chris: Yes. So what, the way we've gone about this is we have a period of two to three months in each metropolitan market where we collect the data necessary to come up with the rating for the home, the ratings for the home in those communities.

We have launched, we have wrapped up three markets in the West, Seattle, Portland, Phoenix; and published ratings in those markets and named the top rated communities. And at the same time we opened up the rest of the Western US to, you know we're out there collecting data in those markets. And shortly you know in about a month, we'll be opening up another 22 markets in the South and then finally hit the Northeast.

And then we'll have, by the end of the essentially by the fall we will have ratings published all across the country.

Barry: Wow that's impressive! Because there are, as you've said, a lot of facilities out there so got a lot of work ahead of you but again, that's going to be a very valuable tool. We look forward to seeing a lot order in the Southeast and we know there are a lot of places in Florida so it will be interesting to see how those stack up.

Chris: Yeah. That's, it's I'm curious too and you know it will be; the other thing we're doing that's going to be fun is we're going to naming the top 100 senior living communities in the US. At the end of the, after we've rated every all markets and that's going to be really interesting to see, you know who rises to the top and we have a lot of, we're excited about the learning that we're going to go through and the learning that we're going to be able to share with the industry. About, what is it about these top 100, what are they doing differently? How are they serving their residents better and you know our, our hope and expectation is that through our ratings and through our top rated lists we actually help the industry improve overall.

Barry: Well that is, thinking about that industry improving as you were saying I realized those ratings are going to change over time I would expect, as people learn from, you know what you've seen and what you're passing along to people; is this something you're going to update periodically?

Chris: Yeah, we will definitely be updating the ratings periodically. We don't have a specific timeline yet but it's, they'll be updated on a regular basis. There are also ways communities can increase their rating. We do, our ratings take into account three things; we recruit local experts in each market. These are people that in their working lives spend their days in and out of senior living communities. The best examples are home care professionals and hospice care professionals, geriatric care managers, social workers, referral agents, those sorts of people. And we get their opinion on the communities near them. That's one thing that goes into the algorithm.

Another is the state inspector reports. And finally the third is consumer reviews. And those have a lesser impact for certain reasons but the two ways communities can influence their ratings are to go out and find those local experts that work in their community that might have a good idea of the quality of a certain provider is providing. So if they can you know refer more experts to us that can help them in addition to by

getting the residents to rate the community they can, they can influence their score that way.

Kathy: I see this is Chris as a way for industry, as you've already mentioned, to really figure out which facilities are doing the best and try to mirror that. So it can only mean good things for residents across the country.

Chris: Yeah we hope so. We hope so.

Barry: It'll be interesting to see what kind of feedback you get as you continue to roll out and as facilities maybe take exception to their ratings and decide they have to do things to change. So we really look forward to catching up with you in several months as you do get a more complete roll out there and as you, I suspect you'll be getting a lot of feedback.

Chris: I'm sure we will. I'm sure we will yeah. We've had some already, most almost all of it positive. We've had a couple of communities that have rated lower that have come to us asked what they could do to change that so you know we definitely are excited about the learning feedback we'll be getting.

Barry: Well we know you're very busy Chris; sounds like you've got a lot going on so we appreciate you taking some time out of your day here to talk to us. Again we look forward to hearing from you in the future and just to let you know that we're going to go ahead and put your seniorhomes.com link on the show notes for this episode and we'll put your phone number on there for folks to contact you. We'll certainly encourage everybody to go out there and take a look because it is a very valuable resource for those who are looking for the right facility for their family members or for themselves.

Kathy: Thank you Chris.

Chris: Thank you very much. It was great talking with you guys.

End Recording

Barry: We appreciate the opportunity to talk with Chris and hope it was valuable and insightful to you as it was to us. I really like one of the perspectives he expressed. That their rankings aren't meant to point seniors and family members to the ONE best care facility instead they want to help focus family evaluations on a short list of facilities that are more likely to do a good job of meeting the needs of senior loved ones. They realize they don't know everyone's individual needs but are making an effort to point us in the right direction.

We encourage you to check out their site for more information. Again as we said during the discussion, we have the web link as well as their phone number in the show notes today.

Well Kathy, why don't you wrap us up with today's quick tip?

Kathy: I certainly will. Today's tip:

How to Get Up from a Fall

Many seniors fall every day. We've all made adjustments to our senior's homes to reduce the possibility of a fall but they'll probably still happen, unfortunately. When a fall does occur, it can be frightening for your senior. Recovery will be best if everyone remains calm.

If your senior should fall and need help to get back up (if they're not hurt otherwise contact emergency help of course), here are some tips to get back on your feet:

- Our first tip: if you fall, remain still on the floor or ground for a few moments.
- Decide if you're hurt. Getting up too quickly or the wrong way could make an injury worse.
- If you think you can get up safely, roll over onto your side. If not call for emergency help.
- Rest a bit to let your body and blood pressure adjust.
- Slowly get up on your hands and knees and crawl to a sturdy chair.
- Place your hands on the seat of the chair and slide one foot forward so that it's flat on the floor. Keep the other leg bent with the other knee on the floor.
- From this kneeling position, slowly rise and turn your body to sit in the chair.

If your senior is at a greater risk for fall, you might want to look into a device that can be worn that will contact emergency help after a fall. You may not be able to prevent every fall, but knowing what to do if one should occur will make a difference in recovery.

Barry: Thanks Kathy, that's a great tip. I could see that being especially helpful to a family member who's there and witnesses a senior loved one fall. Because the natural instinct is to reach out and grab them and help pick them up quickly and from what you've just said we could actually be making an injury worse if we do that.

Kathy: That's correct.

Barry: I'm glad you shared that with us. Well that's it for this episode of the Senior Care Corner Show folks. Hope you enjoyed it and found it interesting. We especially appreciate Chris Rodde for joining us in our discussion today and hope you find something of interest there.



And we hope you stop back frequently at SeniorCareCorner.com or stop by and see us on Facebook at Senior Care Corner. And don't forget when you're looking for resources for senior loved ones or for yourself as caregivers, go out and take a look at our Senior Care Bookstore and the link to that is right there on our homepage at Senior Care Corner. Look forward to seeing you next time and until then we hope you have a great day!