



NEWSLETTER

FOR & ABOUT CAREGIVERS

CAREGIVER CONNECTIONS

JULY - AUGUST 2021

Shortage of Home Care Aides



Paula Span's recent New Old Age column (NYT.com, 7/24/2021) focuses on the shortage of home health aides. Although there have been shortages for years, the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation. A few sobering statistics illustrate the picture.

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics there were 342,000 job losses in the direct care work force in 2020 – this includes nursing homes, other residential care, and home care staff
- These positions came through layoffs, resignations due to health problems, Covid related fears, and lack of childcare
- Employment in homecare rebounded by the end of 2020 and was only 3% below pre-pandemic levels
- However, increased demand for homecare services is the larger problem, with fewer people opting to live in nursing homes or assisted living facilities
- More than 800,000 Medicaid qualified older adults or disabled people are on state waiting lists for home care, and private pay clients are being turned away because of the shortage

One of the goals of the Adler Aphasia Center's newsletter is to connect our many caregivers who live across the New York-New Jersey metropolitan region who may not be able to attend the Center's caregiver support groups.

We hope to share suggestions for self-care, information about community resources, developments in aphasia knowledge, relevant medical advances, as well as caregiver happenings at the Adler Aphasia Center.

We welcome feedback, ideas, and suggestions. Please email your comments to Tamara Heimlich, PhD, Life Coach at Adler Aphasia Center at theimlich@adleraphasiacenter.org.

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- Many home care companies are offering signing bonuses, but as pay is notoriously low in this field, some aides are now taking jobs in better paying industries or are contracting privately for a larger paycheck
- Signing bonuses may not be sufficient to entice workers; a competitive wage is more important. In 2018, the estimated 2.8 million home care aides earned a median of \$12 an hour and \$17,200 annually. More than half depended on food stamps, Medicaid or other public assistance
- Proposals to improve the situation include President Biden's Better Care Better Jobs Act which would expand Medicaid eligibility for home care and improve wages, benefits, and training for workers
- Leading Age, a group representing nonprofit senior care providers has suggested temporary visas and guest worker programs to bring workers from overseas
- The Home Care Association supports a bipartisan bill to provide a \$5000 federal tax credit to offset costs for family caregivers ■



Mobile Stroke Units

In the June edition of AARP Magazine, Oliver Broody writes a riveting article chronicling the treatment of one man after he suffers a stroke in Houston, Texas. The focus of the article is also on the Mobile Stroke Unit (MSU), a specialized ambulance equipped with a portable CT scanner. The purpose of the MSU is to “take the hospital to the patients”, and shorten the time in which treatment is started, especially in the case of an ischemic stroke, when tPA can be administered. To read this article, which also includes a brief history of stroke treatment, as well as recent advances, [click here](#).■

Catching up on Medical Appointments

Many medical offices were closed during the early days of the pandemic, and even when doctors' offices began to re-open, people were afraid to venture into them because of fears of contracting Covid-19. The Wall Street Journal addressed “catch-up care” in a recent article (wsj.com, 7/26/2021) with the following suggestions:

- Begin your appointments with a well visit to your primary care physician
 - Discuss any health challenges that arose during the pandemic
 - Review mental health, activity levels, and if you have been working from home, how that has affected you
 - If you wear a tracking device, share the sleep and fitness data with your doctor
 - Your primary care physician can help you determine which specialists you need to see and which screening tests you may need to have
- Screening guidelines may have changed during the pandemic
 - Colorectal cancer screenings are now recommended for those who are 45, earlier than the previous recommended age of 50
 - CT scanning in smokers has increased with the hopes of detecting lung cancer earlier in this population
- Many medical practices are booked for months with everyone catching up, so call as soon as possible to schedule your appointments
- Some appointments can be via tele-health, so determine whether that is an option for you
- If you moved during the pandemic, decide whether you should switch doctors. If you have a good relationship with your physician, it may be worthwhile to maintain the relationship. However, many doctors may have retired during this time, necessitating a change. Ask friends and relatives for a recommendation but try not to go indefinitely without seeing a physician.■



ASK ADLER

As we prepare to transition to fall it seems like now each day has the potential to be different from the ones before and after. Vaccines have been available in abundance, families that were physically distant have been able to reunite over the summer, and long-awaited vacations have finally been taken. Milestones like weddings and funerals have once again been able to be held in a timely fashion. Mask rules changed, and then changed again as the delta variant insinuated itself into our lives. During this year and a half, the Adler Aphasia Center's virtual programming has been a singular constant, with the staff focused on meeting the needs of our members and caregivers over both modern Wi-Fi and old-fashioned telephone lines.

Times of transition, as we are in now, are known to be stressful because it is sometimes hard to predict what will happen in a new situation. This is the first time in its 18 years that the Adler Aphasia Center has been physically closed for an extended period of time, and certainly the first time under pandemic circumstances.

Welcoming members and caregivers back to in-person programming while wearing masks and social distancing will be very different. Previously, returning for a new semester involved hugging, kissing, and sharing personal space. But the constants that Adler families appreciate as synonymous with the Center, including the opportunity to make new friends and deepen existing bonds, to share and learn from stories of survival, rebuilding, and growth, to advocate for the community, and to obtain support, all while enveloped by a kind, caring, and committed staff, are still here. As the summer moves slowly into fall, with some parts of life remaining constant and others changing, we wish you the best of health, safe times with family and friends, and many moments to relax and recharge as you take care of yourselves and your loved ones. ■

This newsletter is produced by Tamara Heimlich, PhD. Tamara is a Life Coach and Research Associate at the Adler Aphasia Center. Tamara received her BA in psychology from McGill University in Montreal, and her MA and PhD in Clinical Health Psychology from Yeshiva University. She completed her predoctoral internship in the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine at Mount Sinai Medical Center. She also served as the research coordinator for the Comprehensive Epilepsy Center at NYU Medical Center, working primarily on the Multicenter Study of Epilepsy Surgery. Tamara joined the Adler Aphasia Center as a volunteer in 2009, and later, in 2013, as an employee, assuming the role of research associate. In 2017, Tamara began offering life coaching sessions for members and caregivers, and later curated a speaker series to address the unique needs of the Center's caregivers.

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Adler Aphasia Center, a non-profit organization with three full service facilities based in Maywood, West Orange, and Toms River, NJ and ten Communication Groups located throughout the state, is an innovative post-rehabilitative therapeutic program that addresses the long-term needs of people with aphasia and their families. Aphasia is a communication disorder that impairs the expression and understanding of spoken language, reading and writing. It occurs most often from a stroke or other brain injury. It affects a person's ability to communicate, but not his or her intellect. For more information about our programs and services in Maywood, West Orange or Toms River, NJ, or for information about our Aphasia Communication Groups in Bridgewater, Haddonfield, Hammonton, Maywood, Monroe, Morristown, North Bergen, Scotch Plains and Toms River, NJ, visit our website at www.adleraphasiacenter.org or call 20.368.8585.