

REPORT, ARRC B.C. Webinar October 25, 2023

“Transitions to Long-Term Care – The Family Experience”

Wendy Johnstone

On October 25th, 2023, the fifth presentation in ARRC’s webinar series on quality of life in long-term care featured presenter Wendy Johnstone, Director of Programs and Innovation at Family Caregivers of B.C. <https://www.familycaregiversbc.ca>. The program goal was to address the complexities and challenges faced by families when relocating a loved one to long-term care.

Wendy clearly described systemic challenges in long-term care that include inadequate funding, quality of care issues, and long wait times. She talked about a bias towards institutional care with inadequate community support, resources and care for people living at home. The system is convoluted and complex and does not adequately support or sustain family members who provide care to their senior loved ones.

This webinar shone a light on the experience of families trying to navigate the long-term care system. Wendy reported that they often don’t understand how the system works or how to access it. Caregivers called Family Caregivers of B.C. to request help with the following issues:

- Financial burdens, before and after admission of their loved one to long-term care.
- Concerns about quality of care being provided.
- Fear of speaking up in the facility.
- Long wait times contributing to caregiver burnout.
- Transitions which are unsupported – many family caregivers felt a lack of support at the time of admission.
- Difficulty navigating the long-term care system including understanding how to start the process, manage wait lists, not knowing the language, etc.

Wendy talked about the numerous roles that family caregivers experience: finances and legal matters, medications, health advocacy, end of life care, etc. They can feel invisible, excluded, unsupported and unappreciated. She stressed the need for family caregivers and professional staff to collaborate, listen to each other, build relationships and work to find common ground.

Wendy reviewed a large number of resources and practical strategies for ensuring that family caregivers are “recognized, informed, included and empowered”. Resources that professional caregivers can use to refer family members to the organization are available on the Family Caregivers of B.C. website.

The organization’s “Caregiver Support Line” is open Monday – Friday from 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.: **1 – 877 – 520 – 3267**. Callers will find it an accessible resource that provides education, support and system navigation assistance. The online “Caregiver Learning Centre” offers a Newsletter and many free resources such as podcasts, webinars, etc.

Many thanks to Wendy for a very helpful presentation, full of practical and encouraging strategies for change and support. And thanks to ARRC Leadership Team member Louise Holland for hosting. Looking forward to seeing everyone again next month!