

VNA HOME CARE MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) is a trusted provider of home care and hospice services in Northeast Texas. Most VNA patients are covered by Medicare, private insurance, or private pay. Community support, though, makes it possible for VNA to provide these services to patients who lack the resources for needed care.

Willie Gant, age 57, is someone whose life was saved because of this community support. Mrs. Gant was hospitalized in 2006 for congestive heart failure and was referred to VNA for home care following discharge from a Methodist Health System (MHS) hospital. Mrs. Gant is unable to work and lacked health insurance.

VNA and MHS hospitals have been working together to reduce hospital readmissions of congestive heart failure patients. An agreement between the two health care organizations provides for telehealth monitoring by VNA of selected congestive heart failure patients at home following discharge from a MHS hospital in the Dallas area.

Telehealth monitors are installed in these patients' homes to allow daily monitoring of their vital signs. About the size of an alarm clock, the telehealth monitor prompts the patient through a daily series of procedures to measure weight, blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, oxygen level, and other conditions.

The information collected by the monitor is transmitted via satellite to a central station at VNA's Dallas office, where a registered nurse evaluates the patient's health data. If a health problem is detected, the patient gets immediate attention instead of waiting for the next scheduled doctor appointment.

In addition to telehealth monitoring, VNA nurses provide follow-up care to these patients in their homes during their recovery. The nurse visits are funded through the United Way of Metropolitan Dallas.

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A VNA nurse visited Mrs. Gant at home three times a week for the first two weeks of care. The nurse set up the telehealth monitor for Mrs. Gant in her home and taught her how to use it. The nurse also instructed Mrs. Gant on lifestyle and dietary regimens to reduce illness related to congestive heart failure.

During home visits, the VNA nurse checked Mrs. Gant's temperature, blood pressure, oxygen saturation, heart rate, and weight. She assessed swelling, listened to the lungs, and checked for other symptoms. Mrs. Gant was also taught to be alert for symptoms of her illness. The nurse monitored Mrs. Gant's medication regimen and instructed her on proper medication management. If needed, the nurse could contact Mrs. Gant's physician and send a trend report from the telehealth monitor.

"A key benefit of telehealth monitoring combined with nurse visits is better management of patients' health conditions, resulting in better patient outcomes," notes Barbara Kendall, R.N., the lead telehealth monitor coordinator at VNA. "Because we are able to monitor patient health on a daily basis, action can oftentimes be taken before trips to the emergency room or hospital become necessary," she adds.

For Mrs. Gant, the care she received from VNA was a lifesaver. Her recovery was successful and no rehospitalizations for her condition have occurred.

Information about VNA's telehealth monitor can be obtained by calling 214-689-2355.



Barbara Wilson, a registered nurse with the Visiting Nurse Association, demonstrates for Willie Gant how to use the blood pressure cuff on the telehealth monitor. Mrs. Gant received VNA home care following her hospitalization.