



KAREN WOLFROM

Mother-in-law's multiple falls concern woman

ASK THE CARE MANAGER

Dear Care Manager: My 85-year-old mother-in-law lives alone and has had several falls during the past six months. I notice scrapes and bruises on her elbows and hands. She holds onto furniture and walls to get around in her apartment. I'm afraid she will fall, fracture a bone, and need to be hospitalized. My husband is reluctant to discuss my concerns with her. What do you suggest? How may I convince my husband this situation needs to be addressed?

— Fearing Disaster

Dear Fearing Disaster: You are an attentive daughter-in-law and concerned rightfully.

Statistics tell us that after age 65, the death rate is 50 percent within a year after a fall. Unfortunately, many seniors risk losing quality of life after one significant fall or a series of minor falls.

For starters, remove throw rugs and examine her footwear. Determine if stairs or slippery floors are part of the problem.

Falls can occur for many reasons and the first step is to consult with her primary physician. Infections, anemia, hypothyroidism, low blood sugar, vision impairment and many other conditions with subtle symptoms may be the underlying cause. If these conditions may be ruled out, suggest to the physician an in-home evaluation by a physical or occupational therapist.

A falls risk assessment will check balance, coordination, gait and any environmental factors. Perhaps an assisted device like a cane or walker would be prescribed.

Your mother-in-law would be an excellent candidate for an emergency alert call system (necklace or bracelet worn consistently). Online see "emergency alert systems for seniors" and many ven-

Care

(From Page D1)

dors will be found. Local hospitals and your Area Office on Aging may provide resources as well. Share some literature with your husband about seniors and falls to encourage his interest.

If these measures remain unsuccessful, a geriatric care manager with a nursing or social work background may be contacted through [\[manager.org\]\(http://www.caremanager.org\).](http://www.care-</p></div>
<div data-bbox=)

Send your questions to Karen Wolfrom at kwolfrom.surrey@the-hickman.org with "Dear Care Manager" in the subject line.

Karen Wolfrom, MSA, RNC, CMC, RHU, is a member of the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers and the director of Surrey at The Hickman in West Chester. She has more than 20 years of experience working with seniors in management, sales, clinical, teaching and consulting positions in skilled

nursing facilities, assisted living, home care and hospice. She is a graduate of the Lankenau Hospital School of Nursing, West Chester University (undergraduate and graduate), and has completed health insurance studies at The American College in Bryn Mawr. She is currently enrolled in the Certificate in Leadership of Faith-based Organizations program at The Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg.

Her column will appear once a month in the Daily Local News.

Daily Local News 10/17/11