

One afternoon this summer, I got a call from my grandmother's doctor informing me she had fallen, likely due to missing her morning medications, and was now hospitalized. My grandmother has always been independent, refusing many previous offers of assistance, including invaluable services such as home care.

As a medical student, I've unfortunately seen my fair share of hospitalizations due to largely preventable means that home care could have addressed. These include falls, medication adherence issues, or new symptoms that are missed because of lack of contact with a healthcare provider. Remarkably, home care services are associated with improved outcomes in all of these categories [1]. For instance, home care services may include provision of training exercises and environmental modifications that have been shown to reduce falls at home [2, 3]. This is incredibly valuable as falls that result in fracture in the elderly are associated with a 1-year mortality rate of about 25% [4]. The presence of home care nurses is also associated with increased medication adherence, especially in those with chronic illnesses. [5]. Additionally, home care nurses are often the first to recognize exacerbation of chronic illness symptoms or the onset of new symptoms, which usually indicates worsening disease and the need for follow up with a physician. Home care nurse visits are an invaluable addition to the health of our community, though often the largest barrier is getting patients to agree to these services in the first place.

Cathy is a nurse with the Mayne Island Health Centre (MIHC) who makes home care visits on the island. *"The toughest part of our job is getting our foot in the door"* she says, a claim that is supported by previous work showing that the most commonly cited reasons people refuse home care are having a lack of trust in strangers and the perception that they are a burden to others [6]. A lack of trust of home care nursing however can have unintended consequences on the family of those who need care, *"family often find themselves in a role they never intended – as a caregiver"*, Cathy tells me. *"But accepting home care can also help family members get their role back – as family"*.

Cathy makes one thing above all else clear, “*my job is not to take away people’s independence, or to remove them from their homes. My job is to actually help people stay in their homes as long as possible.*” Research also supports Cathy’s objective— home care is associated with reduced hospitalization rates and an overall reduction in the need to access the health care system [7].

My grandmother recently started receiving home care services, and while initially reluctant, she now recognises that allowing herself to accept these services has not taken away from her independence, it has empowered it. It is my hope that, like her, more members of our community will become open to accepting the help of home care and the benefits it can provide, when and if the need arises.

Article written by:

Arlo Adams, PhD (He, Him, They, Them)

MD Class of 2025

Medical Undergraduate Program

UBC Faculty of Medicine (VFMP)

Musqueam, Squamish, & Tsleil-Waututh Traditional Territory

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