

OLDER AND WISER: Easy tips for seeking seniors resources

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Older and
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As we age it seems seniors need more services to keep us healthy and independent.

We need services such as a doctor who has a continuing relationship with us.

We may need good dental care, which is affordable and appropriate to our needs.

We may need physiotherapy for any issues around arthritis or osteoporosis, or home care and/or support when we lose our ability to care for ourselves but want to stay in our homes.

We may need seniors centres to keep us connected socially and keep us from being isolated and lonely, fitness programs to keep us limber and energetic and so on.

But some of the supports for seniors are not that readily available.

Finding a doctor may be a challenge because many seniors are currently seeing a doctor who is ready to retire.

This despite the good news that, according to B.C.'s Seniors Advocate, 92 per cent of seniors in 2015/16 were attached to a GP or GP practice.

This has remained relatively constant over the past three years.

But doctors retiring will be an issue, and if you look at the eight per cent of seniors who are not being seen by a regular GP, how are they managing?

Going to a clinic seems to be one solution, but this often means no continuity of care, which is necessary for seniors.

According to Vancouver Coastal Health, you might call 8-1-1 to reach HealthLink BC's free, 24-hour telephone service, staffed by registered nurses, pharmacists and dietitians who can answer your health-related questions and help you find a family doctor.

A recent query came to me from a "desperate" caregiving relative about her mother and her need for companionship. Her mom didn't need caregiving supports, but needed company to help her in her daily life. And, as research has told us, loneliness, often due to lack of social contact, is a serious issue for seniors. The British government, for example, has created a position called the Minister of Loneliness.

Two suggestions I would make for the caregiver are to contact the Better at Homes Program run by North Shore Community Resources Society and the Peer Support Program run by North Shore Neighbourhood House.

Some people say we live in an age of information overload. We have posters, Google, newspapers (including those with fake news), TV, podcasts, Facebook, Twitter and so on. Yet it seems people are not getting the information they need especially about health and wellness supports for seniors.

So where do people start?

There are a good many sources of information on the North Shore which can help us navigate the information overload. Two that stand out are the Seniors Resource Guide and the North Shore Health and Wellness Guide, both published by the North Shore News.

The 2017 Seniors Resource Guide compiled by North Shore Community Resources Society gives an overview of community services in a number of areas including housing, information, legal resources, social, education and recreation programs.

The Health and Wellness Guide gives an overview of medical services including clinics, dentists, seniors' services, health services such as home care and support, and community, fitness and recreation centres.

The Seniors Resource Guide (2017) and Health and Wellness Guide can still be found at community and seniors centres. Look for a new 2018 Seniors Resource Guide coming soon.

Most seniors' centres or organizations which provide services to seniors have racks of information, usually located near the front entrances. Many also have a staff person able to assist a senior or caregiver.

The B.C. government also publishes the BC Seniors Guide. The guide is “a book-style compilation of information and resources to help us all plan for and live a healthy lifestyle as we age. It includes information on provincial and federal programs, with sections on benefits, health, lifestyle, housing, transportation, finances, safety and security, and other services.”

The guide can be requested by calling 1-877-952-3181 or emailing info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca.

Getting the information we need to keep seniors healthy is an ongoing challenge but there are avenues available.

If all else fails call Lionsview, we might be able to help.

Margaret Coates is the co-ordinator of Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society. She has lived on the North Shore for 47 years and has worked for and with seniors for 20 of those years. Ideas for future columns are welcome Email: lions_veiw@telus.net.

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