

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SMH Presents Eldercare 2009 on Saturday, March 14

PLYMOUTH, N.H. --- Building on the success of last year's conference, and attendees' request for additional information, Speare Memorial Hospital is presenting *Eldercare 2009: Conference for Families and Older Adults* on Saturday, March 14, beginning at 8:30 a.m.

Presented in partnership with Golden View Health Care Center, HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital, Newfound Area Nursing Association and Meredith Bay Colony Club, the conference will be held at Prospect Hall on the Plymouth State University Campus. A continental breakfast will be served and parking is available in the Hyde Hall parking lot accessible from Langdon St. Attendance is free, but advance registration is required by calling (603) 238-6468 or via email at mhutchins@spearehospital.com

"We knew we might do an eldercare conference again," notes SMH Director of Social Services Kathy Wieliczko. "There are always issues to be addressed and listening to the feedback, people found the conference to be a good avenue for education. Last year we focused on resources. This year it will be more about aging issues and trends affecting long-term care."

Joanne Sandberg-Cook, MSN, GNP, ANP, a gerontological nurse practitioner at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center~Kendal at Hanover, will deliver the keynote address *Aging: What's Normal and What's Not*. She says, "I hope to explain the normal changes of aging and why there are important for caregivers to understand. These changes can cause problems with medicines and stress that would otherwise not be much of an issue in a younger person. Therefore, it is important for caregivers to have a clear picture of a given age-related situation when speaking to doctors."

For example, Sandberg-Cook says slowed kidney function is a normal part of the aging process. People lose 10 percent of their kidney function each decade after age 30. As a result it becomes harder for the kidneys to acidify urine, which can lead to a urinary tract infection, or something much more complicated, depending on the individual patient.

“This is where the idea of slow medicine comes in to play,” explains Sandberg-Cook. “If you have an elderly patient who has severe dementia and s/he contracts an infection as a result of only having 50 percent of their kidney’s functioning capacity due to age, is it important to treat the infection, or based on quality of life considerations, let nature take its course? For caregivers, situations like these become a series of complicated decisions.”

“We are thrilled to have Joanne sharing the concepts of patient and family centered care and slow medicine, and how it is applied in her everyday work,” says Wieliczko. “The more information a family has before a crisis, the better.”

Following her address, Sandberg-Cook will participate in a panel discussion on aging issues and trends, mental health, financial planning and legal/estate planning. Panelists include: Professor of Social Work Scott Meyer, Ph.D.; Vice President of Meredith Colony Club Howard Chandler; Attorney Quentin Blaine; Susan Sudak, director of marketing for HealthSouth; Pat Wentworth, RN, MBA, executive director of Newfound Area Nursing Association; and Maureen Platt, long-term support councilor at ServiceLink.

More than a dozen central New Hampshire area medical and support service providers will be on hand to meet with attendees throughout the conference. The conference is scheduled to end at noon.

Spears Memorial Hospital is a 24-hour, acute care, non-profit community hospital and health care provider serving Plymouth and the communities of central New Hampshire for more than a century.

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