



## A Better Place

By Michelle Carlucci with Allison Lippner

I'm part of what is commonly called "the sandwich generation," those of us who care for children and aging parents. Together with my husband Chris, we work and raise our family, running a busy household, while also doing our best to look after my folks. In 2011, we said goodbye to my dad after he lost a battle with cancer. My dad was also primary caregiver for my mom, Mary, a lifelong diabetic in declining health and on dialysis.

After my father was hospitalized for the last time, we knew that my mother could not care for herself at home, and she went to a long-term care facility. It broke my heart to watch my beloved mother suffer with worsening pressure ulcers that made sitting, painfully intolerable. I remember arriving at Mom's birthday party at the nursing home, and seeing her crying in pain from her wounds. When I complained to the staff, they shrugged and said, "Your mom didn't ask for any pain pills." This was the last straw in a series of disappointments with that nursing home, and I vowed to find a better place for my mom.

Lexington Health Network operates skilled nursing and rehab centers, retirement communities and home health services. While it was one of some forty facilities I phoned, I immediately knew that they were different, because the staff seemed to care about me and my mother. Within a day of my call, I was told that they had room for my mother. It took almost a week for this to occur because we had to find a suitable dialysis center first. Each day I would call Lexington worried that her spot would go to someone else, but the admissions manager made me feel so comfortable and always told me not to worry about a thing. When she finally arrived, I was amazed that by the very next day my mom wasn't in pain. The Lexington staff had already determined that medication was needed, and my mother would suffer no more from the pain of pressure ulcers.

My first visit to my mom was at 8pm on a Friday night, and I was amazed to see Allison Lippner, the wound care nurse at Lexington still working hard for her patients. Allison had arranged a consult with the facility's doctor, and they went through our family history with me and asked all sorts of questions about mom. They truly cared, and didn't seem to mind staying so late to accommodate my schedule.

Allison was always on duty, or at least it seemed that way. She took such wonderful care of my mother. Besides the pain medications, she ordered a special mattress and wheel chair cushion to help relieve the pressure ulcers, had the nutritionist consult on mom's diet, and was in touch constantly with the wound care doctor and the dialysis team.

Allison also used WoundRounds®, an electronic wound system to help track and manage my mom's wounds. My mom had several serious wounds, Allison called them Stage III, that went on to heal very quickly and allowed my mom to resume sitting comfortably. Allison explained how the WoundRounds handheld device helped her to manage the healing process and save time on paperwork, making it easier to spend more quality time with my mom.

Lexington was a healing place for both my mom's wounds and also her spirit. I'm so glad that her journey brought her to this wonderful place where the staff truly makes a difference. They are wonderful people and I can't thank them enough. My mom has since passed, and I know she's with my dad again. She died peacefully and we know that we did everything we could to make her as happy as possible. Lexington is truly a better place.

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