

The **POWER** of ATTORNEY PROJECT

Important Caregiving Issues to Know

Welcome to the Power of Attorney Podcast which is part of our Conversations that Matter Podcasts. My name is Mary Bart, Chair of Caregiving Matters. This podcast is intended to provide general information only and is not intended to be a substitute for seeking personalized legal, financial or other advice. This podcast raises issues that our audience can further explore on their own in their own local communities with their own local experts. This project will help to be a call to action for families to solve their issues, find solutions to their problems, and have greater peace of mind.

Mary- Our guest expert is Yvonne Griggs and she is CEO of Alert Best Nursing and Homecare. Welcome Yvonne.

Yvonne- Well thank you very much Mary. It's a wonderful opportunity for me to talk about health care issues that are very much in the forefront these days and certainly our goal is to educate the public to provide assistance to people that are currently looking after their parents, children, whoever is ill to help them get through this difficult period of time. My company provides a variety of services. Homecare specifically in any type of setting. Most of the care we provide is either interim as in after an illness or hospitalization. Often times in between coming home from hospital and before going into long term care. We deal with a lot of seniors, end of life issues, that kind of thing. Thank you very much for this opportunity to discuss some critical issues about care planning and different things that are very critical to know at this stage of life.

Mary- Well, thank you for that Yvonne. Let's get started. I have a series of questions for you and my first is, can you tell me about the Speak Up Campaign?

Yvonne- Yes I can. The speak up campaign is an educational program. The ministry of health has provided this educational information to physicians, health care providers, nurses, long term care providers, and so on. There are a lot of questions in regards to health care consent, end of life care, peoples' wishes and how to proceed with this. There are legalities and it is provincially legislated so there are a lot of things that we know about health care consent, advanced care planning and letting people decide what their wishes are and that's what this campaign is really about.

Mary- Well thank you for that. Just to add that your business is based in Ontario so you are speaking to Ontario laws. For people who live across the country please do listen anyways because Yvonne has important information and examples that relate to anywhere in the country and you may live in Quebec or British Columbia and your mom or dad may live in Ontario so it is important that we listen to our speakers across the country because our families could live anywhere and what Yvonne has to say about these issues are pertinent to all. My next question is what is advanced care planning?

Yvonne – When we have these discussions about the type of care that an individual wants; you may talk to your mom or dad about how much care they would like as they get older. Maybe there is a chronic or sudden illness. What are their values? What do they want to see happen? Do they want extraordinary measures? Do they want to have certain treatment options and for how long? The individual in our society needs autonomy as a critical thing so although these conversations are very difficult at times but it gives the person control over what they want not what we think they need. This is a critical thing not just for family members but also health care providers unless there is a situation where there is a sudden illness or accident there is no problem in providing the care but if there is a lingering illness what type of care does an individual want? So these discussions can be very simple. You know your family member and just start the conversation about these things. It just eases the stress off of family members and gives control to the person about their own health care.

Mary- Thank you for that. My next question is, what is health care consent?

Yvonne- So, as a healthcare provider, It's important that we have to have consent for treatment so that means that the client knows all the options and are educated about the options of their health care. Any concerns, treatments are addressed for example radiation or cancer treatment. What are the benefits? Is it going to prolong their life so we must have their consent for any type of treatment.

Mary- And so what does consent actually mean?

Yvonne- That means as long as the person is able to make their own decision. The other question involving consent is whether they have the ability to actually make a logical decision about consent and that's when we talk about capacity. With the huge increase for example in Alzheimer's disease or dementia, we have to know that people are rationally able to make these decisions and that's where we look at your power of attorney. In the event that you cannot make those decisions, or you don't have that ability you are deemed incompetent.

Mary- So let's carry on with that thought for a moment. What happens if you do not have a power of attorney document appointing someone or have any living relatives?

Yvonne- If you have no living relatives, and you don't have the document then a public trustee and guardian would be appointed for you and there are fees involved and this is why if you have a friend, neighbor, or anyone close then it would be best to have someone appointed. The public trustee is a government employee so there are fees. Only if there is no one is for financial matters and health care would you want this.

Mary- And so my last question for you is, based on your years of experience working with families and clients, what are the pitfalls you have seen when dealing with them and their end of life issues?

Yvonne- Some very sad things have happened. Families sometimes, if there are several children and one person is not specifically appointed to be the trustee and they may not have the same belief systems and it can create huge conflict in families. It ends up sometimes they never ever speak to each other again. They get lost in the conflict and the client or person that they are looking after get lost in the shuffle too. So planning ahead and appointing a trustee for health or financial concerns is really vital. They don't have to be the same person. They don't have to be a relative. There are hierarchies if nobody is appointed. Spouse, then child where there is a line of hierarchy and those people take responsibility but it's best to have those things laid out to avoid future problems and you know even if

someone is appointed there sometimes are issues where the other siblings don't agree and it is tied up in the courts and much could be avoided by preplanning. That's just one example but it happens all the time and family dynamics have somethings to do with that too of course.

Mary- I guess you see in your business that this is an increasing problem with an aging population and you must meet families in this situation quite often and are struggling I'm sure.

Yvonne- It is very sad because not only that but their stress levels are high to begin with. Their loss that they are having to face and none of us want to talk about death and dying but in the end it does ease everyone's stress and it is an eventuality we all have to face and if we talk about it, it makes it all less mysterious and less conflicting.

Mary- Well thank you for that Yvonne and thank you for taking the time to share some of your thoughts, experience and wisdom with us. Could you share your contact information with our audience ?

Yvonne- Yes, I can. My company is Alert Best Nursing Home Care and we service a large area from Toronto to Niagara. We have all kinds of psw's and nurses that provide care and my phone number is toll free at 1-866-959-9913 and in Hamilton if you go to our website www.alertbestnursing.com you will find all our contact information and other phone numbers as well as email addresses so thank you very much Mary for this opportunity to help educate our clients and families.

Mary- Well thank you very much for that and to wrap up today's podcast, Chis Kata, one of our board of directors, and I have a few closing comments.

Chris - Mary, who are our initial project supporters?

Mary – We wish to acknowledge that this project is funded in part by the government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program. Our other initial supporters include Care Connect, The Care Guide, The Healing Cycle Foundation and Scotiabank. Caregiving Matters is an internet based registered Canadian Charity dedicated to educating and supporting family caregivers. 90% of our work is done online and by leveraging technologies. 10% is done by producing local educational events. We leverage technologies in everything that we do ensuring greater reach and sustainability. I trust that we have given some of the highlights of our exciting new initiative. If you are interested in speaking with me about the project, please let me know. We look forward to your questions and your ideas.

Chris - Mary, if listeners have questions, what is the best way for them to contact us?

Mary Bart- You can contact me directly Mary Bart, Chair of Caregiving Matters at 905-939-2931. My email is mary@caregivingmatters.ca and our website is www.caregivingmatters.ca