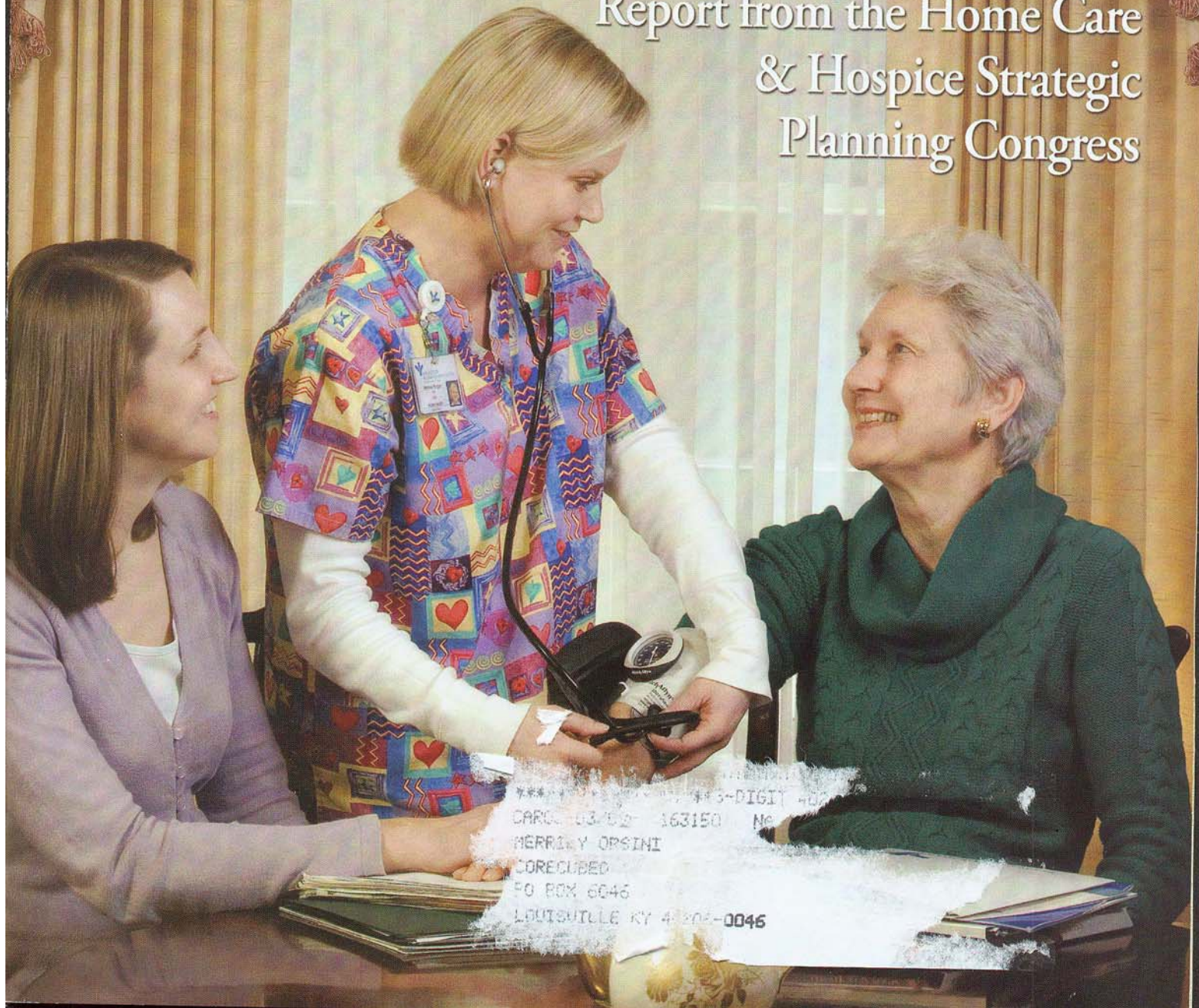


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Using Your Web Site as a Marketing Tool for Long-Term Home Care

By Merrily Orsini



After families gathered for this past holiday season, many had to face tough decisions about their loved ones growing old and frail. For many, it was time to take a good look at long-term care options. This unknown territory can be confusing and overwhelming for families who have many questions depending on their particular situations. There is a lot of information available on the Internet about long-term care insurance, but few answers about long-term home care options and how to choose the best situation for individuals with chronic long-term care needs.

As growing numbers need answers about long-term care options, and as more people want to stay at home rather than be institutionalized, many near and distant families today will look to the Internet to start the research process. For home health care and home care agencies, this is a perfect opportunity to use knowledge and a company Web site to have valuable information available, to establish the agency or specific staff as experts, and to educate potential clients and referral sources.

There are some definite commonalities to the types of health information people are currently seeking online. To become a valuable resource to those seeking answers online you will want to help people to:

- Become more aware of the different types of in-home care available;
- Learn some of the best ways to search for the answers to care levels, and know when care and services at home are appropriate;
- Locate professionals equipped to help in the search and placement processes;
- Learn how to work through some of the challenges faced in making a decision; and
- Learn some of the industry terms for a better understanding of all options.

Here are several things to do to proactively use a Web site to provide long-term home care information as suggested above:

- 1) **Become an information resource:** Sometimes something as simple as compiling useful links, resources, and articles can be immensely helpful to users. Most of the time people spend on the Internet is on researching. Find articles or Web sites that have information on Medicare, Medicaid, private duty and private pay, in-home care insurance options, etc. and create a resource section on your Web site related to long-term home care.
- 2) **Develop quizzes/ questionnaires:** You may already have many tools at

your disposal to help guide people through the process of deciding on the best options for long-term home care and when services at home are appropriate. Develop these into online tools in the form of quizzes and questionnaires that will provide a useful outcome for users. Have the results sent into your office and you automatically have a warm lead for a new client. Here are some suggestions for potential questionnaires:

- a. **Choosing a Long-Term Care Path:** There are many options for long-term care. Provide a guide on how to choose the best long-term care option for each situation.
 - b. **Assessing Needs:** Assessing social, psychological, and medical needs is the first step in deciding what type of long-term care is most appropriate. Create a series of questions that will help gather the vital information for a needs assessment. At the end of this assessment quiz, offer your agency as a professional assessment source, or team with someone who can do that for the agency.
- 3) **Newsletter articles:** Consider authoring a series of articles relating to long-term home care. Publish these in a regular or e-newsletter, and make

certain to publish them on your agency Web site as additional information resources. By proactively presenting information, your existing and potential clients will see you as an expert information source. Be sure to offer a forward option for your newsletter so your articles can be easily passed on to others.

- 4) **Conduct a survey:** Surveys and proprietary data are a great way to successfully market and draw people to your Web site. Poll visitors to your site and ask questions related to medical care and home care coverage, long-term care insurance, their knowledge levels about long-term care, their needs related to long-term care, etc. Compile responses into a report and publish it on your Web site and newsletter. Media as well as potential clients will see this data and begin to use you as an expert source!
- 5) **Link exchange and local resources:** Once people have educated themselves and determined that the long-term care resources your site provides are of value to them, it is important to provide local information and re-

sources so they can begin the process of obtaining assistance with the right long term care options. Solicit local attorneys, insurance agents and other resources to start a link exchange program. Offer to put a link to their Web site on your local resource section and request that they do the same for you. This simple yet effective Internet marketing technique will provide a nice flow of potential clients to your agency Web site, and also provide valuable local resources for visitors to your site.

You are already an expert on long term in-home care. By taking a few easy steps, you can relay this information to potential clients. Use your Web site as the powerful marketing tool that it is and see how establishing your agency or a designated staff person as a valuable resource for long-term home care information could reap many rewards.

About the Author: Merrily Orsini, MSSW, is Managing Director of corecubed, an integrated marketing communications company that specializes in home care and home health industries. Orsini has been active in internet marketing since 1990. She is an 18-year veteran of the private duty industry and currently serves on the Advisory Board of the Private Duty Homecare Association of America.

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