

House Call Proves Life Saving for Area Senior



Dorris Barnett

For Greensboro area nurse practitioner, Marilyn Williams, it was a normal day conducting visits for Medicare health plan Care Improvement Plus. The plan's "HouseCalls" program provides free annual home visits to area members, many of whom have difficulty getting to the doctor's office, and are managing chronic conditions such as diabetes or heart failure.

But for local resident and Care Improvement Plus member, Dorris Barnett, her visit with nurse Williams would prove to be a life-saving intervention.

Upon her arrival, Williams noticed that Barnett's legs were abnormally swollen and inquired immediately about any other discomforts she was having. After a thorough examination, Williams diagnosed Barnett with a life-threatening complication, pulmonary emboli, and recommended an immediate trip to the emergency room.

"From the symptoms she was describing, I knew that there was a possibility of serious complications if she did not get immediate treatment," said Williams.

Now back at home and resting comfortably, Barnett is thankful for the careful attention nurse Williams provided to her, and says that if it wasn't for the Care Improvement Plus HouseCalls program, the blood clot could have worsened.

"Care Improvement Plus' HouseCalls program is wonderful," said Barnett. "After Ms. Williams examined my feet and saw the difficulty I was having, she wrote me a note to take to the hospital and asked that I go as soon as possible. If it wasn't for Ms. Williams' visit I might not be here today to tell my story."

"Georgia has a growing shortage of primary care providers, an issue which significantly impacts residents in rural areas of the state," said Lee Spruiell, senior vice president of field operations for Care Improvement Plus. "Our solution is, in essence, bringing back the old-fashioned house call and providing our members the chance to meet with someone like Marilyn Williams who will take time to answer their questions and comprehensively assess their health needs, providing feedback to their primary care doctor."

According to Spruiell, the plan has completed more than 21,000 home visits in Georgia since the program launched in 2008.

"It's not often these days that you come across people like Ms. Williams who are so nice and willing to sit and listen to your concerns," continues Barnett. "I tell all of my neighbors about the help I got from her and from Care Improvement Plus."