

# Outlook



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## 'Managing the Aging Process' at USC-VHH

By Mirjam Swanson  
The Outlook

Purnima Panchal and her colleagues in the geropsychiatric program at USC Verdugo Hills Hospital field so many questions about the same topics, it felt as if the community was asking for a lecture.

"It was getting to a point that I was getting so many phone calls, I figured we should have an educational series here that's open to the community," said Panchal, who's in charge of community outreach for the hospital's geriatric program. "We can have people attend different topics based on what they want to know."

The next lecture in the monthly series is titled, "All on the Same Team — Working With Healthcare Professionals." Intended to focus on how patients and their care-

givers can best communicate and collaborate with medical staff, the lecture will be held from 6:30-7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 18, at the hospital in the Council Room off the main lobby.

The series — co-sponsored in conjunction with Alzheimer's Greater Los Angeles — kicked off June 20 with a lecture on brain health. Twenty-eight people attended, including patients, spouses and adult children caregivers, all there to listen to an address from Susan Howland, director of caregivers and community education for Alzheimer's Greater Los Angeles.

"There were a lot of good questions," said Panchal, adding that many of the questions dealt with future lecture topics. "A lot of people said, 'Put me on the email

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list; I'm coming."

"Just in general, in [the Foothills] geographic area, there haven't been too many support services for families dealing with aging, dementia and memory loss," Howland said. "And it's really important to have individuals come out and see, in a classroom setting, that they're not the only ones. No one ever prepares you to feed your mother or help her take a shower. And because our roles shift, they're very new and different, and it's really hard to accept those realities."

The subject matter of upcoming lectures is scheduled to address

memory, moving, legal and financial affairs, selecting home health care, tapping into community programs, dealing with stress, facing the holidays and how best to communicate compassionately.

"Individuals who care for a person, especially a family member with Alzheimer's or dementia or memory loss, it's really stressful," Howland said. "It's emotionally exhausting, it's financially exhausting and something we're just not prepared for. There's still so much stigma around brain disease that we don't talk about it to our friends, so I always feel that education and good information helps."

"The more we can build knowledge and capacity within the community, the more prepared I feel

individuals will be when a crisis is faced — or the more a crisis can be averted."

Panchal, who has worked in her position at USC-VHH for 13 years, said she would have benefited from the advice dispensed at these lectures when she was caring for parents and grandparents in her family.

"I get it now," she said. "We've come a long way, and there's been a lot of research and a lot of health care guidelines have changed. And I learned a lot myself by getting involved with the Alzheimer's Association and the Parkinson's Association."

She said there is plenty of room for those interested in attending. To RSVP, contact Panchal at (818) 952-3592 or Purnima.Panchal@vhh.usc.edu.

### "MANAGING THE AGING PROCESS"

#### Lecture series schedule

Tuesday, July 18: All on the Same Team — Working With Healthcare Professionals

Aug. 15: Considering a Move?

Sept. 19: Choosing a Home Health Care Agency

Oct. 17: It Takes a Village — Community Programs to Assist You

Nov. 21: 10 Tips for Facing the Holidays

Dec. 19: Communicating Compassionately With Your Loved Ones

Jan. 16: Getting Your Legal and Financial Affairs in Order

Feb. 20: Preparing for the Unexpected: Hospitalization, Natural Disaster or Emergency

March 20: All About Memory

April 17: Stressed Out? Finding Ways to Cope