

## *WE'RE STILL MAKING HOUSE CALLS*

*By Maureen Donovan, Occupational Therapist – Professional Therapy Services*

In the *good old days*, doctors regularly called on patients in their homes. While this practice has become all but extinct, Home Health services have become a viable and cost effective means of bringing valuable care-giving services to persons rehabilitating at home. For a person needing therapy, it may be a hardship traveling to an outpatient clinic. With Home Health Therapy Services the person can receive Physical, Occupational, or Speech Therapy in the comfort of their home. To receive Home Health Therapy Services, a person is generally considered homebound. However, they may be capable of traveling short distances to doctors' appointments, attend church services, or other essential activities.

The majority of persons receiving therapy in their home have recently been discharged from a hospital, where they may have been receiving treatment for any number of medical conditions. Generally, the referral for Home Health Therapy Services is made by the discharging hospital physician. Requests for service can also be made by the patient or a family member through referral from their family physician without a prior hospital stay.

The therapy services most frequently requested include: **Physical Therapy** for acute, chronic and post-surgical conditions, including strengthening, balance and gait training, and lymphedema treatment. **Occupational Therapy** focuses on rehabilitation of the shoulder/elbow/hand, re-training in activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, eating), adaptive equipment use, and low vision training. **Speech Therapy** is provided for persons with impaired speech fluency, voice disorders, swallowing dysfunction, visual-perceptual deficits, and cognitive limitations.

Providing therapy services in the home has many benefits. Persons are usually more comfortable and less intimidated performing structured exercises and therapeutic activities in familiar surroundings. Therapy in the home is also functional and applicable to the person's everyday life. For example, working on stair training, shower/bath safety, personal care, or swallowing difficulties at mealtime can be conveniently addressed in the person's home environment.

The primary goal of Home Health Therapy Services is to increase and/or maintain a person's functional independence, personal safety and wellness, allowing them the ability to continue living in their own home.

Home Health agencies provide services throughout Central Illinois. For more information on Home Health Therapy Services, consult your physician or the Yellow Pages for a listing of service providers in your area.

