

ConnectCare turns phone into 24-hour lifeline

Imagine you're a person of advanced years or failing health. You may have attentive relatives, friends and neighbours but you're still alone at least part of the time.

You can pretty much take care of yourself, or maybe not. But either way you're concerned that if something were to happen to incapacitate you while nobody else was around, it could be dangerous.

With our aging population, such situations are becoming more and more commonplace, but that doesn't make them any less frightening. Nobody likes the idea of being trapped by sudden illness or accident, unable to let anyone know you're even in trouble.

If you're wealthy enough you can hire someone to be attentive to your needs around the clock but most simply can't afford to do that.

And the reality is that just knowing help is available in a timely manner if needed can be as comforting as having someone permanently on-site.

Providing timely help is what ConnectCare is all about. A not-for-profit part of the St. Joseph's Health Centre operations at the Parkwood Hospital campus, ConnectCare provides a vital emergency link for more than 1,200 London and area residents.

For a nominal fee (\$35 per month, plus \$30 installation) they will visit your home, install specialized communications equipment and train you and those close to you in its use.

The technology is simple. You wear a small transmitter button around your neck (ideally, 24 hours a day). In the event of a fall or any other serious problem, you push the button. This activates a telephone device located in your home that then calls the ConnectCare switchboard, where someone answers within a few seconds, day or night.

You'll be able to hear them through a speaker located in the front of the device and if you are reasonably close you'll be able to carry on a conversation with the operator, who can then call a friend, neighbour, relative or, if necessary, an ambulance to assist you.

If you can't hear the operator but are near a telephone, picking up the receiver allows you direct, automatic communication once you've pushed the transmitter button — you don't have to dial.

If there is no response from you after the emergency signal, the operator will follow a sequence you've approved in advance. It might still involve calling one of your designated "responders" or an ambulance could be dispatched to your home immediately.

In any event, you will not be isolated and can be confident help is on its way.



JIM CHAPMAN

The staff at ConnectCare are people-oriented, an important element in any kind of emergency response system. An elderly friend interested in having the service installed asked me to be there when ConnectCare's Evelyn Smith came by her house to explain what was involved. I was impressed with Smith's patience and ability to put my friend at ease even though the technology was unfamiliar to her.

I was also impressed by the variety of choices available in the event the alarm is pushed, including the option of just seeking a little reassurance from a friendly voice who knows who you are. It's all part of the service and it's automatic once the button is pushed.

For people in distress, ConnectCare turns the telephone line into a lifeline.

If you'd like more information, they'll be happy to talk to you about your needs or those of someone dear to you. Give them a call at 685-4550.

Jim Chapman is host of CJBK-AM's Talk of the Town. His column appears Saturdays.