
Plenary: What Matters Most – Hosting a Difficult Conversation

Jean Minkel, PT, ATP

Session description:

Engaging in a discussion around loss and mortality can be treacherous. These subjects evoke a lot of emotion and challenges our own thoughts and reactions to a highly emotional subject. This presentation will present ideas exploring how to prepare yourself to “host” a difficult conversation with a person who is experiencing a progressive decline in physical functioning or is actively dying. We will explore the need for self-reflection to assess your own comfort level with leading and/or participating in a person-centred conversation about what is most important to this person, especially if time is short. We share the importance of planning for an interview, which involves genuine curiosity and openness, about the person’s understanding of the situation and his/her desired outcome.

Speaker biography:

Ms. Minkel is a physical therapist and master clinician well recognized for her work in Assistive Technology. She is currently the Senior Vice President for Care Coordination and Rehab Services for Independence Care System, a nonprofit long term care program in New York City. Jean is also an independent consultant who provides educational and consulting service to all members of the A.T. team – consumers, therapists, suppliers, manufacturers and payers.

Prior to entering the private section, Jean was the director of the Seating and Mobility Program at the Center for Rehabilitation Technology at Helen Hayes Hospital in West Haverstow, NY. She produced the videotape series, Spending or Investing – Funding Assistive Technology. She is co-author of the Wheelchair Selection Guide: How to use the ANSI – RESNA Standards; the Manual Mobility Training Guide and the Power Mobility Training Guide.

The A.T. community has recognized Jean for her contributions by awarding her the RESNA Fellow Award in 1995 and the Sam McFarland Mentor Award in 2012.