

DR. JACQUELINE DUPONT, GERONTOLOGIST



ABOUT DR. DUPONT

Dr. Jacqueline DuPont is a gerontologist who completed her graduate work in Gerontology at USC and the Geriatric Education Center at the Keck School of Medicine. In 1995, she founded Irvine Cottages, a collection of residential assisted living environments, many specializing in memory care. She is CEO of Irvine Cottages as well as Assured InHome Care. She serves on the Board of Directors of many non-profit organizations, such as the Alzheimer's Association, and is on the Advisory Board of the UCI MIND Institute.

Q: How worried should I get if I see signs of memory loss in a loved one?

A: Many things cause memory loss or dementia, and it's often reversible, but you must be proactive in seeing that the problem is assessed accurately. I love the UCI MIND Institute (949-824-2382) because it has a thorough memory assessment center. Proper assessment quickly rules out all the possible causes. For example, someone may have hydrocephalus (water on the brain) and exhibit memory loss. However, that condition can be treated. Also, the sooner we assess memory loss or any of the many types of dementia, the better we can treat it. Getting the right medication early on can be beneficial.

Q: What kind of care is available for older adults with memory loss and dementia?

A: Most older adults would rather age in place at home. And they can, with such services as what we provide at Assured InHome Care, where all employees are insured, bonded, fingerprinted and background checked, tested, and then receive regular training from well-credentialed professionals. There are situations, however, when in-home care becomes impractical. With models like the one we use at Irvine Cottages, assisted living is the next best thing to being at home. The person grew up in a house, lived in a neighborhood – why put them in a clinical environment? In the individual Cottages, a more homelike setting operates like one big happy family.

Q: At what point should a loved one with dementia be moved into an assisted living facility?

A: Every case is unique. However, when the caregiver burden becomes too heavy, the family can no longer provide 24-7 care, or it may no longer be financially viable, then it may be a good time to move the person. Another reason may be if the older adult needs more stimulation or activity. Please be proactive. Don't wait until there's an incident where you need to call 911. The Alzheimer's Association's 24-hour hotline (800-272-3900) is an invaluable resource.

Q: You were honored at the 9th Annual Conference on Business Ethics sponsored by the Orange Catholic Foundation, which makes you the ideal person to ask: how can people identify trustworthy assisted living or in-home care services?

A: Most important: verify every claim made by the company or facility. Next, make sure the referral source is valid and objective. Ask about use of independent contractors, liability insurance, training, credentials of nurses and doctors, and dig deep to confirm their answers – in other words, be an advocate. We have a moral obligation to protect the people in our care. Irvine Cottages is the only residential care facility with camera monitoring in every room, and while it's been controversial, it protects everyone. I'm very excited that Vista Gardens, opening in October 2011, will also have a full-spectrum monitoring system and amazing memory care. But by far the most important thing is to constantly be an advocate for your loved one in terms of treatment and care.

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