

## Patient Story

# Caring for Barbara



## Managing Multiple Chronic Conditions at Home

Christine Kaczmarek and her husband have been caring for Christine's mother, Barbara, in their home for over four years. Despite Barbara's multiple chronic medical conditions, at 91, Barbara still loves to wear pink, sing, and tell jokes. And her health doesn't stop her from overfeeding treats to the family dog. "She thinks he's always hungry!" Christine says, and laughs.

Together, Christine and her husband work to manage Barbara's atrial fibrillation, dementia, congestive heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and coronary artery disease.

But even with their best efforts, Barbara had been falling and passing out frequently due to her cardiac medications causing low blood pressure. They ended up bringing Barbara to the emergency room about once a month.

Christine says, "Every time something went seriously wrong with my mom, we brought her to the emergency room or called an ambulance. We did that for her congestive heart failure, pneumonia, a broken hip, and bleeding."

Emergency room visits generally resulted in Barbara being admitted to the hospital. As an in-patient, Barbara became confused and frightened. Often the hospital admission was followed by an extended period of in-patient rehabilitation.

Christine says, "My mother hated rehab. She cried every day to come home. I went to see her every day, and I was so upset to see her like that. My mother's memory was always worse when she got out of rehab. She would get mixed up. She likes to be at home, where things are familiar."

## Landmark Support Creates Improvements

Then, Landmark came into the picture. Christine says, "I heard about Landmark from my insurance company. And Landmark kept calling us, telling us it's a great thing. At first, I hesitated. I thought, 'My mom already has a primary care provider.' But I finally agreed to a Landmark visit."

Since that first home visit, Landmark providers have slowly tapered several of Barbara's prescriptions. They were careful not to taper her medications so much as to bring on a flare of her congestive heart failure or uncontrolled atrial fibrillation.

Yet they reduced the medications enough to prevent her from fainting and landing in the hospital as she had numerous times before. The prescription adjustments required close observation, frequent visits, team support and collaboration with her primary care physician.

“Landmark has definitely had a positive impact on my mother’s health and my peace of mind,” Christine says. “Before, my mother

would start coughing and filling up with fluid, and we always took her to the emergency room for congestive heart failure. Now, we just call Landmark. It prevents us from taking her to the ER.”

**Christine adds, “Thanks to our Landmark providers, my mother has not been to the ER in almost a year. When I call Landmark and explain the problem, they come the same day.”**

## Ongoing Medical Care

Christine says, “We still bring my mom to see her primary care physician about every six months. But my mom is very wobbly and in a wheelchair. We wouldn’t be able to bring her to the doctor’s office often. It is a problem getting her there, but she has been with her doctor for a very long time. And Landmark keeps our primary care physician up-to-date between office visits.”

Christine also notes sustained health and quality of life improvements in her mother. She says, “Now, with Landmark house calls, my mom rarely gets sick. Landmark is why my mom is still living at home. If I didn’t have Landmark, who knows where she’d be. If we had instead moved her to a nursing home, she would have been dead a long time ago.”

## Landmark Builds Trust with Caregivers

As Christine attests, Landmark works to build trust with both patients and caregivers. Christine says, “We are very happy with our Landmark providers and the nurses we talk to over the phone. Landmark doesn’t leave you hanging after a home visit. They always call us back a day or two later to follow up, to check in on my mom, see how she’s doing, give advice, and ask if we have any questions.”

Christine says, “I even wrote a letter to Landmark to tell them how wonderful they are for us. And I’ve been telling all my friends about Landmark, because my friends take care of their elderly parents too.”