

# HEALTH & WELLNESS

## Toledo company provides high-level health care to people in their homes

By Dawn Wolfe

Feature Story

"Our vision is to help people stay in their homes and in their communities as long as they possibly can," said Dr. Joe Wells, who along with his wife, Neeti, owns AmeriCare Home Health Services in Toledo. "You can't replace nursing homes or hospitals, but health care does not stop there – health needs do not stop there."

With that vision in mind, Joe and Neeti became the owners of AmeriCare in 2002, and grew the agency from two locations housed in Bryan and Defiance to a total of five in northwest Ohio by adding agencies in Toledo, Findlay and Fremont. The group also operates two other agencies in Cleveland and Columbus and serves 21 counties in Ohio in all. Joe and Neeti attribute their group's growth to their staff's dedication and ability to provide complete, high-level quality home health care services to all ages – from newborns to seniors.

"Our nurses, therapists and aides are highly skilled in providing a full range of home care, including specialized services such as telehealth for cardio-pulmonary conditions, orthopedic and neuro-rehabilitation, high-level wound, and IV care and services for people living with Alzheimer's and dementia," Neeti explained. In addition to home care nursing, AmeriCare also provides physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech language pathology, home health aide services, and medical social work.

After a referral is received by AmeriCare, the agency sends a registered nurse to do a full intake evaluation of what the client's needs are in addition to skilled nursing. Additional experts such as a physical therapist, occupational therapist or speech-language pathologist may also be consulted based on those needs. For example, an occupational therapist may be sent in to assess the client's home to see what changes may need to be made to make the

home safe and accessible. Based on the assessed needs, a plan of care is designed coordinating with the client's physician, and all appropriate services are provided.

***"In a nutshell, our goal is to have our clients as safe and as functionally independent as possible in their homes – the whole idea is that it's more convenient and cost efficient to have people stay at home. At the same time, that's where people want to be. When we deliver quality home health care in the home, it's more productive for everyone."***

Of course, it's a huge step to trust complete strangers to provide health care in your home to yourself or a loved one. Joe and Neeti realize that, and in response their company does a complete background check on potential staff, including fingerprinting and checking with a minimum of three references. AmeriCare's hiring process also involves two interviews, and all new staff undergo extensive training and complete a minimum number of hours of supervised home visits before they are trusted to work with clients independently.

"Our supervisors also do regular quality assurance checks and make regular calls and visits to our clients to see how satisfied the clients are with the services they are receiving," Neeti explained. In addition, AmeriCare's staff is expected to take continuing education classes, and the company has a dedicated Continuous Quality Improvement staff whose entire job is to look for ways to improve its services.

Concern about financial resources is another hurdle that people face when they need health care, and home health care is no exception. AmeriCare is well prepared to help in this arena as well. While the agency is a Medicaid, Medicare, and Area Office of Aging provider, the company's staff assists clients to access available community resources to make sure that their home health needs are met.



Neeti & Joe Wells

In 2011, Joe and Neeti Wells opened the Alpine House of Toledo, an assisted living facility, to allow them to serve clients who need more support than can be provided in a home health care setting but less than is provided by a nursing home. This allows clients to stay in the community for as long as possible. "That's our vision – to help people stay in and enjoy their communities for as long as they can," Neeti said.

According to Joe, he and Neeti were inspired to open AmeriCare because of their work as occupational therapists and directors of rehabilitation for various area nursing homes. Today, they remain very involved not just with their own business, but in helping shape the health care industry and advocating for clients' needs. Individually and as a company, Neeti and

Joe are members of several national professional organizations, and Joe is currently serving as vice president of the Ohio Occupational Therapy Association. "We are strong advocates for health care in the community," he said.

Their advocacy doesn't end with their clients. Neeti stressed that she encourages community members to call AmeriCare with any questions they may have about home health care – whether or not they choose AmeriCare as their home health provider. "Our goal is to help our entire community," she added.

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