

Letter

Thanks for letting me know how others are handling the care of elderly relatives.¹ Supporting my mother and my mother-in-law for the last 7 or so years has been a major stress for my husband and me.

The details of that experience would not add to what you wrote in *Science Editor*, but I want to contribute two practical tips:

1. After my mother-in-law moved to the nursing home this year, my husband and I signed up for our telephone company's voice mail service (\$6.50 per month). We already had an answering machine, but this is of no use when we are tying up the phone line with the Internet. Now we know that we won't miss any calls.

2. In 1994, we helped my mother-in-law obtain a reverse mortgage, which not only provided money for nonroutine expenses but also decreased my mother-in-law's worries considerably. When her house was sold this year, the loan was repaid. Given the costs of the reverse mortgage (initial fees, interest, and service charges), there wasn't much left over, but the reverse mortgage had done its job and had allowed my mother-in-law to remain in her home comfortably for many years. The AARP Web site has information on reverse mortgages.² Obtaining one took a fair amount of legwork by my husband and me, but it worked well.

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References

1. Whalen E, Gastel B. Science editing and caregiving: experience and guidance. *Sci Ed* 2001;24(4): 114-9.
2. Exploring reverse mortgages. Available at www.aarp.org/revmort/home.html. Accessed 29 July 2001.