A common reason for admission into assisted living facilities is to receive assistance with medication management, and growing evidence suggests that residents residing in the assisted living community pose the same complex medication-related issues found in other long-term care environments. For these reasons, ASCP believes pharmacists have a tremendous opportunity to partner with the assisted living communities to help them improve medication therapy outcomes and the quality of life for their residents. ASCP believes by creating a model for providing pharmacy services to the assisted living community, the result will be improved adherence with cost-effective medication therapies and decreased hospital admissions and physician visits secondary to medication-related adverse events, all of which can ultimately lead to enhanced quality of life - a goal of the resident, assisted living community, and pharmacist. Furthermore, medication therapy management can improve health outcomes, decrease hospitalizations, save money, and prevent residents moving from the assisted living community to the nursing home setting.

These guidelines are intended to:
• Enable residents of assisted living facilities to receive the medication therapy management services needed to promote their health, functionality, and independence
• Direct pharmacists who provide consulting and dispensing services to assisted living settings
• Educate assisted living facilities about services they should expect to receive from consultant pharmacists and the dispensing pharmacy
• Educate residents, family members, policy makers, and others about the important role of pharmacy services in the assisted living setting
Consultant or senior care pharmacists are uniquely qualified to assure the best possible medication therapy outcomes in assisted living residents. In addition to being an accessible health care professional, pharmacists, especially consultant and senior care pharmacists specialized in geriatrics, have the knowledge and skills to address the unique needs of our seniors. Consultant and senior care pharmacists identify, prevent and resolve medication-related problems. ASCP believes the addition of the pharmacist to the health care team within the assisted living community will result in residents maintaining a healthier, longer, and more independent life.

Providing quality pharmacy services to an assisted living community is much more than supplying non-traditional medication packaging. Providing quality pharmacy services to the assisted living community involves additional time, knowledge, systems and procedures that are beyond routine services provided by most pharmacies and pharmacists. These additional services result in higher operating costs to the provider pharmacy. Therefore, ASCP believes adequate payment to cover these costs must be provided to the pharmacy. More importantly, payment for these services must not be associated with or expected to be covered by the current payment structure (i.e., nominal reimbursement for medications that includes minimal dispensing fees and lack of payment for clinical services). Payers must realize and prepare to pay for these services using a separate formula designed to cover the costs associated with providing these services in addition to paying for the cost of the individual medications.

**Senior Care Pharmacist and Pharmacy Services**

Similar to their responsibilities in the nursing facility setting, the consultant or senior care pharmacist promotes optimal outcomes for assisted living residents and oversees the entire spectrum of pharmacy services, and the dispensing pharmacy provides specific services and products that are different from those provided in the community or retail setting.

In addition, payment to consultant and senior care pharmacists for clinical services is separate from reimbursement to pharmacies for dispensing of drug products and associated services.

Services and products to be made available or provided by pharmacies and pharmacists servicing assisted living communities include:

- Provide medication therapy management services to assisted living residents on an ongoing and interactive basis.
- Make available education/training to both assisted living community personnel and residents relating to medication use (e.g., proper assistance, adverse effects), wellness strategies, and other topics.
• Assist in the development of policies and procedures for pharmacy services provided within the community
• Provide direction and oversight regarding all aspects of the acquisition and handling of medications in the assisted living community. This may include some or all of the following considerations:
  o Receipt and interpretation of physician’s orders
  o Order and receipt of medications
  o Labeling of all medications
  o Medication distribution systems
  o Systems to provide timely delivery of medications
  o Storage of medications
  o Expiration dating of medications
  o Parameters for medication use
  o Accuracy and efficiency of medication assistance
  o Compliance with physician’s orders
  o Accountability and handling of controlled substances
  o Adequate record keeping
  o Monitoring and assistance with self-administration of medicines
  o Return, release, and/or destruction of discontinued or expired medications
  o Compliance with state and federal laws and regulations
  o Quality assurance procedures including drug utilization evaluation
• Communicate effectively with the resident, family members, resident’s physicians, and community personnel:
  o Communicate pertinent findings and recommendations directly with the resident or caregiver and resident’s physician, either orally or in writing, as appropriate
  o Distribute written reports of medication use reviews to community personnel, as appropriate, and establish procedures for monitoring timely follow-up to recommendations
  o Provide drug information to physicians, community personnel, and resident and family members
• Take steps to facilitate having reports/recommendations acted upon by pertinent personnel/providers
• Prospective evaluation of medications
• Timely medication delivery through provision of services such as, but not limited to, 24-hour pharmacist availability
• Assistance with development, implementation, and update of pharmacy-related policies and procedures
• Specialized compliance packaging systems
• Hard-copy or electronic medication records
• A means of storing medications
• Diversion prevention tools of controlled substances
• A means of communicating orders to the pharmacy
• All necessary forms to facilitate the needs and services of the assisted living community
• Mock surveys to assure compliance with standards and regulations
• Education and training for their assisted living community personnel, both licensed and non-licensed
• Provisions for financial arrangements

Professional Competencies

General Competencies for Pharmacists

Pharmacists who are involved in providing services to assisted living residents, whether dispensing medications to these residents or providing consultant services, should have certain competencies. These include:

• The ability to effectively communicate with the following:
  o Residents and caregivers as needed to obtain resident medication histories, perform resident interviews, and counsel about medications
  o Physicians and community personnel as needed to successfully implement medication therapy recommendations, and improve patient care outcomes
• Knowledge of the physiology of the aging process, the social and psychological needs of seniors, and the impact of these age-related changes on medication therapy outcomes
• A thorough understanding of the rational use of medications and the proper application of medications to diseases
• Knowledge and proficiency in assessing the use and application of new medications and technology, including complex equipment and delivery mechanisms
• A thorough understanding of the development and application of medication therapy monitoring parameters
• Knowledge of the stability characteristics and storage requirements for medications and biologicals
• Knowledge about laws and regulations pertaining to pharmacy practice and long-term care settings

Consultant Pharmacist Competencies

The consultant or senior care pharmacist practicing in assisted living facilities must have special knowledge and proficiency and must be able to apply that knowledge when evaluating medications and making recommendations to improve medication therapy outcomes and quality of life for residents. The consultant or senior care pharmacist also applies expertise to help maintain the assisted living community’s compliance with all applicable laws and regulations governing pharmacy services in the assisted living setting. In order to achieve these outcomes, the consultant pharmacist should develop and maintain the following qualifications:

• The knowledge, skills, and ability to effectively manage medication therapy for older adults
• The knowledge and proficiency to apply principles of continuous quality improvement to assist the community in establishing an appropriate system to assist residents with medication administration
• The ability to effectively participate on interdisciplinary teams and committees responsible for the development and assessment of all therapeutic programs and all aspects of care for residents
• The ability to improve therapeutic outcomes for residents through in-service programs and training for community personnel covering a broad range of topics designed to improve the delivery of pharmaceutical services
• Knowledge and proficiency in:
  o The legal responsibilities of the consultant pharmacist to the assisted living community and to its residents
  o All state and federal laws and regulations governing pharmacy services, including acquisition, disposition, handling, storage, and administration of medications in assisted living facilities
  o State and federal laws and regulations governing the operations of assisted living facilities

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American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
1321 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA. 22314-3563
(703) 739-1300
FAX: (703) 739-1321
http://www.ascp.com
e-mail: info@ascp.com