



Providing Consultant and Dispensing Services to Assisted Living Residents

A common reason for admission into assisted living (AL) facilities is to receive assistance with medication management, and growing evidence suggests that residents in the AL communities pose the same complex medication-related issues found in other long-term care environments. For these reasons, the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (ASCP) believes pharmacists have a tremendous opportunity to partner with AL 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 AL 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, AL community, and pharmacists. Furthermore, medication therapy management (MTM) can improve health outcomes, decrease hospitalizations, save money, and prevent a need for residents to move from the AL community to the nursing home setting.

These guidelines are intended to:

- Enable residents of AL facilities to receive the MTM services needed to promote their health, functionality, and independence
- Direct pharmacists who provide consulting and dispensing services to AL settings
- Educate AL 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 AL setting

Consultant or senior care pharmacists are uniquely qualified to ensure the best possible medication therapy outcomes for AL residents. In addition to being accessible healthcare professionals, 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.

Providing quality pharmacy services to an AL community is much more than supplying nontraditional medication packaging. It 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 important, payment for these services must not be associated with or expected to be covered by the current payment structure (ie, 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 of the services and the medications.

Senior Care Pharmacist and Pharmacy Services

The consultant or senior care pharmacist promotes optimal outcomes for AL residents and oversees the entire spectrum of pharmacy services. 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 drug products and associated services.

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

- Provide MTM services to AL residents on an ongoing and interactive basis.
- Make available education/training to both AL community personnel and residents relating to medication use (eg, 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 AL community. This may include some or all of the following considerations:
 - Receipt and interpretation of physician orders
 - Order, receipt, and labeling of medications
 - Medication distribution systems
 - Systems to provide timely delivery of medications
 - Storage of medications
 - Expiration dating of medications
 - Parameters for medication use
 - Accuracy and efficiency of medication assistance
 - Compliance with physician's orders
 - Accountability and handling of controlled substances
 - Adequate record keeping

- Monitoring and assistance with self-administration of medicines
- Return, release, and/or destruction of discontinued or expired medications
- Compliance with state and federal regulations
- Quality assurance procedures including drug utilization evaluation
- Communicate effectively with the resident, family members, resident's physicians, and community personnel:
 - Communicate pertinent findings and recommendations directly with the resident or caregiver and resident's physician, either orally or in writing, as appropriate.
 - Distribute written reports of medication use reviews to community personnel, as appropriate, and establish procedures for monitoring timely follow-up to recommendations.
 - Provide drug information to physicians, community personnel, and resident and family members.
- Take steps to facilitate having reports or recommendations acted on by pertinent personnel or providers.
- Prospectively evaluate medications.
- Ensure timely medication delivery through provision of services such as, but not limited to, 24-hour pharmacist availability.
- Assist with development, implementation, and updating of pharmacy-related policies and procedures:
 - Specialized compliance packaging systems
 - Hard-copy or electronic medication records (EMRs)
 - A means of storing medications
 - Diversion prevention tools for controlled substances
 - A means of communicating orders to the pharmacy
 - All necessary forms to facilitate the needs and services of the AL community
 - Mock surveys to ensure compliance with standards and regulations
 - Education and training for AL community personnel, both licensed and nonlicensed
 - Provisions for financial arrangements

Professional Competencies

General Competencies for Pharmacists

Pharmacists who are involved in providing services to AL residents should have the following competencies:

- The ability to effectively communicate with:
 - Residents and caregivers as needed to obtain resident medication histories, perform resident interviews, and counsel about medications
 - 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 AL 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 AL community's compliance with all applicable laws and regulations governing pharmacy services in the AL setting. 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:
 - The legal responsibilities of the consultant pharmacist to the AL community and to its residents
 - All state and federal laws and regulations governing pharmacy services, including acquisition, disposition, handling, storage, and administration of medications in AL facilities
 - State and federal laws and regulations governing the operations of AL facilities

ALC

Adapted with permission of the ASCP. Guidelines were approved by the ASCP Board of Directors, September 27, 2006. For more information, visit www.ascp.com.