

## Medication Management and Polypharmacy 7 STEPS to Managing Contributing Factors

In order to discuss contributing factors and how to manage those factors, the word polypharmacy must be defined. Polypharmacy has nothing to do with the number of medications one takes, **but** deals with medications that you don't have an indication or reason for such as a condition/diagnosis. Polypharmacy means an individual is using more medications than they need.

One of the concerns is many physicians and pharmacists define polypharmacy as an individual that has more than one pharmacy, or having more than one physician prescribing medications.

With the above definition, you may want to get started with managing medications in your facility, by making a list of all residents that are on nine or more medications. Have the physician review the list and substantiate (reason) the use of each medication. The nursing facility staff will need to document in the resident's clinical record if the physician responds that all the medications are appropriate at this time.

In addition, below is a list of seven steps facility's can implement to avoid polypharmacy.

- ↪ If your facility utilizes more than one pharmacy, then try to group the residents so they only receive their medications from one pharmacy.
- ↪ Communicate with the attending physician when there is more than one physician treating their resident. When another physician who is not the attending writes orders, then call or fax this information to the attending. Include a list of what the resident is already on and their doses.
- ↪ When a resident readmits from the hospital with new medications or new dosages, call or fax this information to the attending along with other hospital stay information. Include a list of the resident pre hospital medications and the doses.
- ↪ Develop a formalize process/steps for staff and family to use regarding changes related to medications, when family members request medication addition or changes.
- ↪ Every time a medication is ordered the facility nursing staff and CMA's need to know why they are giving it and for what condition/diagnosis is prescribed and any related side effects.
- ↪ When taking an order for medication or a new dosage order from a physician, ask him/her for the condition/diagnosis the medication is being used for and record that information in the order and the time limitation for the medication.

- ↳ Continual communication is vital between the facility staff, resident/family, pharmacy, pharmacy consultant and physician(s).

Implementing the recommended steps listed above and setting these standards can assist the facility staff, physician, consultant pharmacist, pharmacy, and resident/family to avoid unnecessary medications and avoid duplication of medications.