

7 Benefits of Working with a Long-Term Care Pharmacy

Staffing concerns continue to burden assisted living communities, which can make medication management a challenge. Multi-step manual processes, residents with complex medication regimens, and managing issues when they arise can all take up staff time that could be spent caring for residents.

Working with a long-term care (LTC) pharmacy can help take some of that burden off the shoulders of nurses and staff while improving efficiency and helping to keep residents safe. Here are five benefits an LTC pharmacy partner can offer.



1. Efficiency

Efficiency is especially important for communities that are experiencing staffing challenges. LTC pharmacies make it easier and faster to distribute medications while reducing the risk of errors. Clearly labeled compliance packaging simplifies medication distribution and eliminates the need to search through bottles. It also makes it easier for staff to know when a refill is needed.

2. Access

Another advantage is delivery. Even if a resident needs a medication right away, with 24/7 operations, LTC pharmacies are equipped to make timely deliveries, all hours of the day and night when many retail pharmacies are closed. "In the event that a loved one needs a medication urgently, we can deliver it," says Hether Arce, Director of Strategic Accounts for Senior Living at PharMerica. "Once we receive a valid prescription, our goal is to deliver critical and urgent medications within 4 hours."

3. Safety

Safety may be the most important benefit working with a LTC pharmacy can bring. The compliance packaging that makes medication management easier for staff also makes it safer. Labeling on pharmacy compliance packaging is typically larger than the label on a bottle, which prevents errors by making it easier to match the right medication to the right resident and check it against the MAR. It's also easier to spot missed doses – all staff has to do is look at the blister pack to know that a dose has been given. Compliance packaging also helps prevent diversion of medications.

Consultant pharmacists can also help communities enhance safety through medication regimen reviews, fall risk assessments, and one-on-one consultations for residents or their families.

Pharmacists can also participate in multi-disciplinary meetings, bringing their medication management expertise to behavior management, polypharmacy prevention, and care planning.

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4. Automation

According to the Kaiser Foundation, 89 percent of Americans over the age of 65 take one or more prescription medications for long-term conditions. And 39 percent of them take five or more. That's a lot of medication to manage and a lot of refills to order and track. The LTC pharmacy can help by setting up automated refills and handling any necessary outreach to the prescribing physician. This can often be done in advance so the community knows what to expect and when medications will be delivered.

"We provide a delivery calendar a year in advance to take the pressure off the community to reorder. These medications will come automatically unless the facility tells us the order has been discontinued or the resident has been discharged," says Arce.

5. Accountability

Many families with a loved one living in a senior living community want to step up and manage medications for their family member. But that commitment may be one more responsibility added to an already full schedule of work, childcare, and managing a household. Letting an LTC pharmacy take responsibility for their loved one's medications helps reduce that burden and helps ensure that medication gets to the resident accurately and on time.

"We all know life happens," says Arce. "And if that family member doesn't show up, the resident doesn't get their medication. But if we don't send the medication, now there's someone to hold accountable. You can't get that from a retail pharmacy."

6. eMAR Integration

A pharmacy provider's seamless eMAR integration enables automatic documentation of med pass into the record to save labor hours, reduces adverse drug events, makes communications with the pharmacy faster and easier, and supports electronic prescribing for more timely fills. These advantages not only help reduce workload for staff by eliminating manual processes, but also protect residents' safety.

7. Education

Education by nurse consultants can help communities enhance competencies around medication storage, administration, and documentation, all of which can optimize both efficiency and safety. They can also help communities prepare for audits and quality assurance reviews by observing workflows and conducting on-site reviews.