May 23, 2012

The Honorable Herb Kohl
Room: 330, Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kohl:

AMDA - Dedicated to Long Term Care Medicine (AMDA) supports the amendment entitled, “Improving Dementia Care Treatment in Long-Term Care Facilities Act.” AMDA represents approximately 5,200 medical directors, attending physicians, and others who practice in the long-term care continuum. Our members collaborate with an interdisciplinary team to provide services in a variety of long-term care settings, ensuring the highest quality of care to their residents.

We are committed to reducing the unnecessary use of antipsychotic agents by refocusing the interdisciplinary team on a better understanding of the root cause of dementia related behaviors. The role of the medical director is to coordinate the clinical care of the facility residents and implement resident care policy, playing an integral role in the team that provides the clinical care in the facility. In that role, medical directors implement policies and procedures that promote a process of person-centered care, learning “the story” behind each resident, ruling out potential medical causes of behavioral symptoms and medication monitoring. While there is an established, evidence-based role for antipsychotic medications in managing psychoses such as schizophrenia and bipolar mania, we are concerned about potential unnecessary use of these medications in persons with behavioral and psychological symptoms related to dementia (BPSD).

Medical directors endeavor to educate facility staff, residents and families about appropriate use of antipsychotic medications, and to focus the interdisciplinary team on quality person-centered dementia care. Your amendment shares AMDA’s mission to achieve this goal by establishing provider education programs that will promote high-quality, evidence-based treatment by providing objective informational materials to physicians and other providers. To that end, AMDA has developed a number of resources, including Clinical Practice Guidelines, a medication management manual and several webinars related to person-centered dementia care.

AMDA looks forward to working with you to improve long term care by enhancing and educating the interdisciplinary care team, further developing strong relationships with residents and their advocates, and supporting caregivers in long term care. If you should have questions or comments, please contact Alex Bardakh, MPP, Senior Manager for Public Policy at abardakh@amda.com or 410-992-3132.

Sincerely,

Matthew S. Wayne, MD, CMD
President, AMDA