



## NEWS RELEASE

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**CONTACT: Jackie Vance  
jvance@amda.com  
410-740-9743**

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### **AMDA Makes White Paper on Physician's Role in Assisted Living Policy**

*Columbia, MD* – The AMDA House of Delegates approved the white paper, *Physician's Role in Assisted Living*, during its meeting early this month in Charlotte, NC. Drafted by an interdisciplinary assisted living workgroup, the paper responds to the growing number of assisted living facilities (ALFs) in this country and the need for physician involvement in resident care in this setting.

The paper emphasizes the importance of the primary care practitioner (PCP) as a clinical resource for assisted living residents. The document states, "Each individual entering an ALF should receive an initial assessment and should have a PCP approved care plan to address their clinical issues." The paper also stresses the need for care documentation tools in this setting. It says, "Just as the Minimum Data Set came to be widely applied in nursing facilities and the OASIS in home care, there should be a similar tool to guide the care required by the typical AL resident."

Discussion at the AMDA Consensus Conference to Develop Clinical Guidance for Assisted Living, held in 2006, led to the development of this paper. Conference participants recognized several communication/training issues that needed to be addressed, including AL staff often is not skilled in recognizing when a problem arises and when to call the practitioner; AL staff often do not know how to monitor a treatment/management plan and don't know how and when to notify a practitioner when the plan is unsuccessful.

Among the recommendations in the paper is that ALFs should inform the PCP when "they admit one of his/her patients and should give the PCP at least the following information: phone number to the appropriate clinical office, nursing supervisor, or administrator and explain the procedure regarding who to contact to communicate new/changed orders or status of resident." The document also suggests that ALF staff develop policies that include "notification of the PCP regarding hospital transfers so that issues such as medication reconciliation and medication management can be reviewed and updated as needed by the PCP."

The paper addresses issues to help ensure effective, safe medication management in this care setting. It recommends that ALFs have medication policies, clinical capabilities, and services and care limitations that are communicated to potential residents and their families before admission. Additionally, the paper says that there should be clearly defined lines of communication between AL staff and the PCP and that plans should be patient-centered and accommodate patient preferences whenever possible.

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As for the PCP, the paper says that these physicians should support their ALF patients by encouraging the facility to accommodate their wishes and preferences, find out whom to contact at the ALF to provide medical orders and other clinical instructions, and discuss/describe for the resident, families, and key staff the likely trajectory of the resident's illness or conditions.

"The publication of this document is important and timely because of the explosive growth in the AL population and the recognition that the current residents of these facilities present many of the challenges faced by skilled nursing facilities (SNFs). We would like ALFs to benefit from the experience and knowledge we have gained from SNFs over the years," says Anthony Lechich, MD, CMD, one of the co-chairs of the workgroup.

Alec Pruchnicki, MD, CMD, who also worked on the paper and co-chaired the workgroup, notes, "We felt there needs to be some guidance on the complex issues of frail elders in this setting, where services, staffing, and acuity often vary from facility to facility. Any policy that helps standardize quality processes in this fairly new environment of assisted living can only improve services for residents, and that is our ultimate goal."

Proactively addressing issues such as these is important as about 38,000 assisted living residences in the United States are housing about 975,000 seniors. To [view the white paper](http://www.amda.com/governance/whitepapers/al_physicians_role.cfm), go to [www.amda.com/governance/whitepapers/al\\_physicians\\_role.cfm](http://www.amda.com/governance/whitepapers/al_physicians_role.cfm).

The American Medical Directors Association (AMDA) is the national professional association of medical directors, attending physicians, and other professionals practicing long term care medicine committed to the continuous improvement of patient care. The organization provides education, advocacy, information, and professional development for medical directors and other practitioners from various disciplines working together to deliver quality long term care.

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