



NEWS RELEASE

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Dr. Jonathan Evans Represents AMDA at Senate Aging Hearing on Antipsychotics

Columbia, Md. – AMDA – Dedicated to Long Term Care Medicine Vice President Jonathan Evans, MD, CMD spoke at a Senate Special Committee on Aging hearing entitled *Overprescribed: The Human and Taxpayers' Costs of Antipsychotics in Nursing Homes*. The hearing focused on the continued use of atypical antipsychotics among nursing home residents suffering from dementia despite a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) “black box” warning, the high cost to taxpayers, and efforts to develop and use safer alternatives.

Dr. Evans presented on the second panel along with Tom Hlavacek, Executive Director at the Alzheimer’s Association of Southeast Wisconsin; Cheryl Phillips, MD, Senior Vice President of Advocacy at LeadingAge; and Toby Edelman, Senior Policy Attorney at the Center for Medicare Advocacy. In her testimony, Edelman notes Dr. Evans call for a different paradigm. In his comments, he states, “Behavior itself is not a disease, simply put, behavior is communication.” Dr. Evans offered a medical director’s and physician’s perspective on the pressure involved in all care settings to prescribe medication to address behavioral issues in dementia patients. He observed that many patients entering the nursing facility come directly from an acute care setting already on the medication.

Dr. Evans testified to AMDA’s belief in and promotion of a multidisciplinary team approach to patient centered-care. AMDA has been actively engaged in educating members on the appropriate use of antipsychotics. In March, AMDA published a new educational tool, *Multidisciplinary Medication Management Manual*, which provides practitioners in long-term care with information and tools to help them improve patient care, enhance medication management, and reduce medication errors. This manual includes a chapter on appropriate prescribing of psychoactive agents in the long-term care setting, which is designed to help guide physicians regarding such issues as the clinical and regulatory documentation necessary when residents are prescribed psychoactive medications.

Prior to the hearing, Dr. Evans said, “This is all about improving the quality of care for seniors across the continuum. I hope to shed some light on improved drug prescribing in the elderly and the promotion of patient-centered care.” He added, “This includes educating physicians and caregivers, empowering patients and families, and focusing on understanding behaviors in dementia so that we can understand what patients are trying to communicate and get them what they need.” Dr. Evans noted, “It is important for our association to be involved in hearings such as this. AMDA has been a leader for decades in promoting quality care and the appropriate use of medications, and part of our responsibility is to educate lawmakers as well as physicians and others.”

This hearing expanded on the discussion of leading experts at the Special Committee on Aging's December 2010 Forum, *Until There's a Cure: How to Help Alzheimer's Patients and Their Families Now*.

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AMDA – Dedicated to Long Term Care (formerly the American Medical Directors Association) 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. AMDA provides education, advocacy, information, and professional development enable its members to deliver quality long term care.