



NEWS RELEASE

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AMDA Responds to Newly Issued OIG Study on Antipsychotic Use in Nursing Homes

Columbia, MD -- A newly issued study from the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) titled "Medicare Atypical Antipsychotic Drug Claims for Elderly Nursing Home Residents" calls for provider education on the appropriate prescribing of antipsychotics for nursing home residents. AMDA—Dedicated to Long Term Care Medicine acknowledges that psychotropic drug use remains a challenge in this setting and continues to make this a priority issue. Currently, the organization has many educational efforts to reduce and even eliminate the inappropriate use of these medications. William Smucker, MD, CMD, a medical director who has assisted with drafting clinical practice guidelines aimed at ensuring appropriate psychotropic use, said, "We have several tools that address this issue, and they all stress evaluation and using these drugs as a last resort when there are no alternatives and only for the shortest amount of time possible."

One of AMDA's most recent efforts relates to a December 2010 U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging forum titled "Until There's a Cure: How to Help Alzheimer's Patients and Families Now." This forum was designed to address the quality of care delivered to people with Alzheimer's disease and dementia and quality of life issues related to both patients and caregivers. AMDA's Educational Plan for *Education on the Appropriate Use of Antipsychotics in Nursing Homes* was included in the informational pieces distributed to the attendees at the Forum. This included AMDA's plans for the March 2011 issuance of its *Multidisciplinary Medication Management Manual*, which addresses the appropriate use of antipsychotics, developing webinars on this topic, and holding a day-long forum of experts to develop a white paper regarding this issue.

Dr. Smucker agrees that responsible use of antipsychotic medications has long been a hallmark of practice in long-term care and that physicians have a leadership role. He said, "I have only a few patients on these drugs, and I can tell you the precise reason for every last one of these prescriptions. And every prescription has a treatment goal." In addition to the individual practitioner responsibilities with respect to antipsychotic prescribing, a facility's medical director has an invaluable role to assure quality of care and quality of life for patients by reviewing processes of care in the facility for patients with dementia and behavioral concerns. Dr. Smucker pointed to recommendations in the 2001 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, *Improving the Quality of Long Term Care*, urging facilities to give medical directors greater authority and hold them more accountable for medical services.

Specifically, the 2001 IOM report said, "Nursing homes should develop structures and processes that enable and require a more focused and dedicated medical staff responsible for patient care. These organizational structures should include credentialing, peer review, and accountability to the medical director." Dr. Smucker said that he and his colleagues are using tools, such as AMDA clinical practice guidelines (CPGs) on dementia, delirium, and acute problematic behavior to guide these efforts and establish best practices. Most recently, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid

Services referenced these CPGs in its guidance to surveyors as viable evidence-based tools to guide care.

In addition to these clinical practice guidelines, AMDA has 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. AMDA also has published *Mental Health Documentation in the Nursing Home* and *Practical Psychiatry in the Long Term Care Home: A Handbook for Staff*, which aims at educating nursing and other staff.

“We strongly believe that the decision to use any drug should involve thoughtful evaluation, consideration of quality of life issues, and environmental factors, treatment of underlying conditions, and possible side effects and interactions,” said Dr. Smucker.

CBS Evening News will air an interview, tentatively scheduled for Monday, May 9, with AMDA member, J. Kenneth Brubaker, MD, CMD, discussing the new OIG report, as well as AMDA’s efforts on the appropriate use of antipsychotics in nursing homes. To view the complete OIG report, please visit, <http://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-07-08-00150.pdf>.

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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.