

Managing Controlled Substances in Residential Care

Many questions and challenges arise from nurses regarding the management of narcotics in the assisted living environment. This is particularly true given the differences in staffing requirements, resident pharmacy options and self-administration of medications.

Of particular concern are:

- ◆ **Lack of a nurse 24 hours a day.**
- ◆ **Mail order medications delivered in large quantities.**
- ◆ **The ability of resident's to safely administer and store their controlled substances.**

First, lets consider the Chain of Custody rule.

Controlled substances can be dispensed in one of two ways:

- 1). From the pharmacist directly to the patient, OR
- 2). From the pharmacist to another licensed healthcare professional for administration to the patient.

In the assisted living environment, nursing staff can be faced with both types of dispensing. It's important to understand the role of the nurse in these transactions.

All narcotics handled by other than the resident must be accounted for. Remember to:

- **Maintain the chain of custody for all controlled substances that licensed staff members have access to, this means...**
 - a. reconcile each medication delivery to the facility. Check drug against proof of use sheet and the delivery documentation.
 - b. count the medications and proof of use sheets at every shift change,
 - c. maintain a signature log and reconciling discrepancies to prevent potential diversion
- **Residents that administer their own medications must prove competence through a safe medication assessment and should be educated by facility staff as to the importance of maintaining security for all medications.**
SEE ATTACHED Self-Administration Competency Form

Storage and Security (Diversion Prevention)

Mail order deliveries are especially problematic given the high volume and the bulk packaging. Accountability becomes extremely time consuming. Here are two suggestions for managing:

- 1). Facility policy that all narcotics are dispensed in punch cards or counters. If the mail order company does not provide either, then the resident may obtain from any pharmacy that will comply.
- 2). The facility will provide or insist upon a secure locked area in every apartment/room to store and secure all medications for residents who self-administer.