

Medication Management in Rural Assisted Living Settings.

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The long term goal of this research program is to improve quality of medication service, reduce inappropriate medication use, and improve function and quality of life for residents by developing and testing a multi-site intervention to improve medication safety in rural AL. *The objective of this R-21 funded study* is to specify the content for the proposed intervention and to conduct feasibility testing of measures related to medication safety to facilitate process and outcome evaluation for the subsequent intervention study. The study is being conducted in eight rural AL settings in Washington and Oregon and included focused interviews, observations, and record review. This study aligns with the Institute of Medicine call for improving patient safety, specifically by focusing on reduction of medication errors and improvement of medication management in AL. Research on patient safety related to medications in rural communities is in its infancy, and even less is known about rural AL settings. The study brought together research and clinical expertise from nursing, medicine, pharmacy, and health systems. The states of Oregon and Washington are recognized as national leaders in developing and evaluating innovations in AL. Specific aims include:

**Identify communication structures and processes in AL that potentially promote or impede medication safety.*

*Identify communication structures and processes that promote or impede medication safety within individual facilities from the perspectives of residents, RNs, unlicensed assistive personnel (UAPs), pharmacists, primary care providers and administrators.

*Identify effective mechanisms through comparison of communication structures and processes in facilities with low and high error rate

**Evaluate the feasibility of process and outcome measures related to medication safety*

*Evaluate the feasibility of calculating a facility-level error rate by using the DRUGS instrument to assess resident skill/errors in medication self-administration and an observation method to assess UAP skill/errors.

*Evaluate the feasibility of a screen for adverse drug events using assisted living and medical record review.

The target of this program of research, improving medication safety in AL, is an issue of clinical significance for a vulnerable long-term care population. The ultimate goal is to improve safety and quality of life for AL residents, through enhancing the ability of residents and UAPs to manage medications effectively.

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Current Teaching in Gerontology:

I teach community health nursing with RN to BSN students working with older adults in community based settings such as assisted living facilities, senior centers, hospice, multi-level retirement communities and home health care. I also teach an interdisciplinary elective course titled Aging and Health Promotion for undergraduate and graduate students. In addition I supervise the work of Master of Nursing students conducting scholarly projects relevant to gerontology.