



# LTCPA

Long Term Care  
Pharmacy Alliance

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## **Long Term Care Pharmacy Alliance Says It Is Time to End the Confusion and Let Nursing Home Care Providers and Pharmacists Help Seniors Choose the Right Medicare Prescription Drug Plan**

Washington, D.C. --- In response to reports of wide-spread confusion among seniors seeking help enrolling in the new Medicare prescription drug plan, the Long Term Care Pharmacy Alliance (LTCPA), has sent a letter to the President and Congress this week urging a change in Medicare rules that currently prevent nursing home staff and pharmacists from counseling seniors about which of dozens of Medicare drug plans best serve their needs.

Under current regulatory guidelines issued by the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), which administers the new drug plan, nursing home staff and pharmacists are not allowed to help seniors choose the best drug plan for their needs. Instead, the rules direct nursing home care givers and pharmacists to refer seniors and their families to a CMS internet plan finder or a toll free phone number to find information about plans.

"We very much want to the new prescription drug plan to be successful in serving nursing home residents," said LTCA executive Director Paul Baldwin. "Unfortunately, current regulations prevent seniors from receiving help from the very care providers who are responsible for their well-being. That needs to change. Care providers want to help and they should be allowed to help. Simply telling them to point frail elderly nursing home residents to a computer keypad or a telephone is not good enough."

A typical nursing home resident is 84 years of age, suffers from eight different diseases and is on nine medications at any given time. Over half of all nursing home residents have some level of cognitive impairment.

"The Bush administration recognized the special circumstances of seniors in nursing homes when they gave them the option to change drug plans monthly as their medical needs change. Now we need to change the rules so seniors can get help in choosing the right plan," Baldwin added.

A Kaiser Family Foundation survey released this past week shows 76% percent of seniors have never surfed the web, and only 8% of seniors have ever called the 1-800-MEDICARE phone number. Those options are even less helpful for nursing home residents, a majority of whom are cognitively impaired and in frail health. The same survey also found 75% of seniors expect their pharmacist to be knowledgeable about the plans.

The stakes for nursing home residents are especially high, even for those Medicaid-eligible seniors who will be automatically and randomly assigned one of perhaps dozens of plans by CMS. Beyond the basic information about drugs covered and plan costs, plan details which restrict or delay immediate access to drugs can have serious health implications, and that information may be even more difficult nursing home residents to discern online.

"The [Medicare plans] are hard enough to figure out for a 65-year-old with a college degree and a computer at home," Richard Mollet, executive director of the Long Term Care Community Coalition recently told the Orlando Sentinel. "There are a lot of frail, impoverished people in nursing homes who are going to fall through the cracks and suffer and die because of it."

The Long Term Care Pharmacy Alliance represents the leading providers of long-term care pharmacy services to residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. Find out more at [www.ltcpa.org](http://www.ltcpa.org)

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