

Clinical Partnerships with a Local Touch

Delivering Value Beyond Medication

IN SERVING THE LONG TERM and post-acute care pharmacy needs of its clients, PharMerica employs a three-pronged approach to achieving optimal outcomes by tapping into the company's expertise in the medical, consultant pharmacist, and nursing fields.

At a time of a flurry of regulatory and clinical activity around the COVID-19 pandemic, it makes even more sense for long term care and senior living communities to have a pharmacy partner capable of seeing what risks lie ahead and then being able to implement solutions to answer these challenges.

Mission Bound

In undertaking this multi-pronged strategy, PharMerica is furthering its mission: to help people live their best life and at the same time advance the success of its clients by providing the capabilities and trusted expertise to help facilities stay ahead.

To understand better how PharMerica brings its strengths to bear for each client, it is important to realize that the company, while being a national leader in the pharmacy space, is also intensely focused on the local delivery of its services. And, it keeps this philosophy when meshing the three-pronged approach, says William Mills, MD, senior vice president, medical affairs, at PharMerica.

"PharMerica prides itself on being a partner with the long term care and senior living communities it serves," he says.

"We have really seen this work: being a large company with scale with a local presence. It has proven to be the key to our high-quality medical management, exceptionally high medication adherence, and also our robust consulting program," Mills continues.

"For example, every prescription sent by prescribers helps our pharmacists flag potential adverse drug interactions, realize opportunities for e-prescribing, and play a role as some of the ways that long term care and senior living can minimize avoidable hospitalizations and decrease readmissions."

Flu Season Like No Other

In practical terms, Mills points to PharMerica's efforts this pending flu season as a prime example of how the company puts its clients in a position to succeed in what may prove to be an especially harsh combined flu-COVID-19 time period.

"The COVID-19 pandemic makes now the perfect



MILLS

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WDOWICKI

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time to not only continue to work to protect our clients' residents from the coronavirus, but also to plan for the rapidly approaching flu season," he says. "It's critically important for senior living leadership to start planning flu shot/vaccine strategies while everything is fresh in our minds with respect to infection control and appropriate precautions."

There is a dual threat out there, Mills says, noting the role PharMerica pharmacists can take in helping to procure and deliver the flu vaccine, which may be a sign of things to come with a COVID-19 vaccine sometime later this year or early in 2021.

"On the long term care side we have the ability to procure and administer a vaccine with our pharmacist team while working with nursing staff, and on the senior living side, our Value Med service line actively promotes and convenes onsite flu vaccine clinics," he says.

On a potential COVID-19 vaccine, PharMerica is also front and center with its Chief Pharmacy Officer T.J. Griffin a part of the federal Operation Warp Speed effort to bring a vaccine to bear as quickly and safely as possible. "PharMerica is looking to play a leading role by using our abilities to get vaccines out widely to long term care and senior living. We have more than 225 local consultant pharmacists experienced in vaccination strategies," Mills stresses.

And, notably, since the pandemic began, PharMerica has focused on implementing best practices in infection control, visitor management, employee screening, and streamlined reporting and triage protocols to optimally support communities.

"Our approach, including our pharmacist-led outbreak mitigation approach in long term care, has been published in four peer-reviewed medical journals, and the work has been cited by the World Health Organization and the International Long Term Care Policy Network, among others," he says.

Consulting and Nursing Strategies

Prongs two and three in the PharMerica effort to bring clinical excellence to its clients are the consultant pharmacist and nursing operations. For starters, Marti Wdowicki, director of clinical operations – South, PharMerica, says the company's 225 local consultant pharmacists throughout the country are a valued member of every client facility's interdisciplinary team.

She says these pharmacists help long term care and

senior living communities achieve optimal outcomes for their residents and their bottom line.

Armed with thorough understanding of the facility's unique needs, the consultant provides a tailored program that encompasses the educational, regulatory, and cost-containment concerns of the facility while assuring appropriate medication therapy for each resident. Some examples include:

- iMRR New Move Ins (Senior Living and Skilled)
- iMRR Falls Review
- E-Prescribing Strategy
- Reporting and Education to Improve Outcomes
- Education and Training

Wdowicki, a 23-year veteran of PharMerica, says the fundamental role of the consultant pharmacist is to review the medication of every nursing home resident and offer clinical services to assisted living and other senior living settings.

"In addition to meeting the regulatory compliance needs of clients in the skilled nursing environment, there is the work required to mitigate risk by providing clinical oversight and also the work to make sure the right medications are being used at the best price point," she says.

Personal Touch

The pharmacists typically are in their jobs for the duration, Wdowicki says, allowing PharMerica to offer a personal touch with its customers, residents, and administrators alike.

"Normally, you will see a pharmacist sitting down [in non-COVID times] at a nursing station, talking to a director of nursing or nurse about their husband having trouble with some medication, or a family member's blood pressure being up or down, or how to safely destroy a resident's unused medications," she says.

"We get personally involved with the individuals who staff our client facilities, and we are reviewing the same residents month after month and they really get to know everyone, building strong bonds over the years," Wdowicki says.

Nursing's Role

Elena Hart, senior nurse consultant, PharMerica, represents a dedicated team of over 140 local field nurses who consult with facilities and community staff and provide education, as well as support through state requirements and regulations.



HART

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This job is more than just filling orders, considering long term care facilities today need a partner who can help them stay ahead of risks and opportunities.

Hart says PharMerica in turn backs up its pharmacy capabilities with clinical consulting services to help clients improve the quality of care and their operations for optimal outcomes and revenue, rounding out the three-pronged approach to excellence.

PharMerica's specially trained consultant pharmacists and nurse consultants provide an added layer of safety, delivering expert advice through:

- Medication regimen reviews to ensure appropriate therapy, reduce errors, and minimize polypharmacy;
- Staff education to advance knowledge and reduce risk;
- Field support for state requirements and regulations; and
- Survey audit, preparation, and support.

Hart notes that "our interview process is quite extensive as we are looking for someone who has long term care experience, is able to work autonomously, and has a desire to travel."

As a proactive service, Nurse Consulting Services offers PharMerica clients a variety of audits and education, including mock surveys, which help communities stay in compliance with state and federal regulations.

"We are looking for reliable and trustworthy people that are seeking a long-term career with PharMerica," Hart says.

"Building a solid relationship with our clients is vital to a successful partnership. Establishing trust and dependability aids in our efforts to keep the facility in compliance and when making recommendations for areas of improvement to the director of nursing.

"As a liaison for our customers, our goal is to assist in providing quality care, while remaining compliant with ever-changing regulations," Hart says. "Accomplishing this aspect follows the consistent efforts of PharMerica to keep the partner's best interest at heart."

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