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**National Report Documents Attitudes, Practices, and Concerns of
Long-Term Care Interdisciplinary Leaders**

Kikaku America International has released the 2009 *Senior Care Digest Interdisciplinary Report: A Survey of Long-Term Care Health Professionals*, an annual survey of long-term care leaders, including medical directors, consultant pharmacists, directors of nursing (DONs), and nurse practitioners (NPs). The report, which is part of the sanofi-aventis Managed Care Digest Series[®], focuses on current issues such as the impact of medication therapy management (MTM) services, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Five-Star Quality Rating System, long-term care workforce issues, health information technology, and interactions between the various disciplines.

Some key highlights from the report include:

- Approximately two-thirds to three-fourths of physicians, pharmacists, and directors of nursing as well as 84% of nurse practitioners said there is either a moderate or extreme shortage of geriatric-trained health professionals in their respective disciplines.
- Relatively small percentages of each discipline said that the MTM requests they received either were very valuable or moderately valuable, while larger percentages said they didn't know the request's value or had no opinion.
- The survey results suggest that while practitioners support Tag F309 - Quality of Care in theory and favor efforts to improve pain management, they seem to be waiting to see the guidance in action before they reach any firm conclusions or put their full support behind it.
- While physicians and NPs expressed divergent opinions about who has ultimate responsibility for patients, the two disciplines agreed on other topics. For example, nearly identical percentages of physicians and NPs either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that vitamin D supplementation prevents falls in the elderly (56% and 57%, respectively). The two disciplines also agreed about the benefit of prescribing statins for nursing facility residents (only 11% of NPs and 4% of physicians said they do not prescribe statins for

- this population). However, an identical percentage of respondents from each discipline (89%) said they do not prescribe statins in residents who are receiving hospice care.
- Pharmacists and DONs expressed similar opinions about how frequently illegal diversion of controlled substances occurs in nursing facilities. Forty-three percent of pharmacists and 31% of DONs said this happens occasionally, compared to 38 of pharmacists and 40% of DONs who said it occurs rarely. Only 6% of pharmacists and 5% of DONs said diversion occurs frequently.
 - Most DONs (63%) said they have not yet experienced a Quality Indicator Survey, a recently revised version of the federal nursing facility survey process. However, nearly a third of DONs said they would welcome any improvement in the current survey process. One in five—19%—said they prefer the QIS over the traditional survey process.
 - More than half of pharmacists (53%) reported that unused noncontrolled medications are transferred to a waste disposal company, while 15% reported disposing of medications into the sewer. Another 15% said they mix medications with substances such as coffee grounds and a liquid and discard them. A small percentage (5%) said medications are incinerated on-site.

“The survey results showed that practitioners are flexible and resilient when faced with changes and challenges. As regulations change and issues such as workforce shortages take their toll, practitioners respond with determination, creativity, and teamwork,” says *Senior Care Digest Interdisciplinary Report* Executive Editor William Simonson, PharmD, FASCP, CGP. “It is clear from the responses to various questions that even when practitioners have different opinions, they are committed to working together and they put the needs, comfort, and well-being of their patients first.”

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A copy of the 2009 Senior Care Digest Interdisciplinary Report: A Survey of Long-Term Care Health Professionals can be obtained at: <http://www.managedcaredigest.com>