

# **National Survey of Long-Term Health Professionals by Novartis Reveals Growing Use of Technology, Strengthening of Team Roles**

## **For Immediate Release**

Novartis Pharmaceuticals announces the release of “*The 2006 Senior Care Source: An Interdisciplinary Survey of Long-Term Care Health Professionals*,” its annual survey of long-term care health professionals.

The survey is undertaken to help identify and address the unique challenges of medical directors, pharmacists, directors of nursing, and nurse practitioners who work in the long-term care environment.

Representatives from each discipline responded to a series of questions on such issues as the impact of the Medicare prescription drug benefit, computer utilization and electronic medical records, the evolving role of consultant pharmacists and collaborative practice by pharmacists, satisfaction with the medical director, and the revised urinary incontinence Ftag.

Some key findings published in the report include:

- When asked whether the Medicare prescription drug benefit (Part D) would improve or worsen patient outcomes, all disciplines most frequently said that outcomes would worsen due to decreased access to needed medications. Respondents also indicated overwhelmingly that they expect medication-related problems will increase under Part D.
- Not surprisingly, pharmacists expressed overwhelming support for their role in collaborative practice. However, it was interesting that more than half of medical directors agreed or strongly agreed that pharmacists should be able to order prescription refills and switch patients to therapeutically equivalent drugs.
- All disciplines expressed strong support for the well-established roles that consultant pharmacists traditionally have played, including drug interaction identification, provision of drug information, offering inservice education, and providing valuable suggestions on prescribing options. Pharmacists increasingly are becoming involved in other administrative and clinical functions designed to optimize drug therapy, such as participating in the facility’s quality assurance and assessment process and assessing drug therapy outcomes.
- Increasingly, technology is a common and important component of daily work in long-term care. Approximately one-third of pharmacists, directors of nursing, and nurse practitioners, as well as 16% of medical directors, reported the presence of electronic medical records (EMRs) in their facilities. Nurse practitioners also indicated the availability of electronic versions of radiology and other diagnostic reports. Similar percentages of medical directors, pharmacists, and nurse

practitioners reported using personal digital assistants (PDAs) for drug information/drug interaction; however, pharmacists use laptops more than other disciplines. Additionally, directors of nursing reported that nurses at all levels generally use computers in a way that is consistent with their roles and responsibilities.

- With the exception of nurse practitioners, approximately one-half of each discipline expressed the opinion that urinary incontinence is inevitable in most nursing facility residents. However, they also indicated that they believe it is not a normal condition and that most incontinent residents can achieve some level of improvement.
- Pharmacists, directors of nursing, and nurse practitioners all indicated general satisfaction with their medical directors, with directors of nursing indicating the greatest degree of satisfaction, especially with “clinical, direct patient care issues.” The greatest degree of dissatisfaction overall was with the medical director’s “administrative activities.”

“It was impressive to see that, despite the challenges they face, these long-term care practitioners generally are satisfied with their work; and most plan to continue serving in their respective roles. Clearly, these individuals gain great satisfaction from their work,” said the report’s Executive Editor, William Simonson, PharmD, FASCP, CGP. He added, “Respondents from all disciplines overwhelmingly indicated that they feel as if they are part of an interdisciplinary team. This is likely an important source of their job satisfaction and their plans to continue working in their discipline.”

To obtain a complimentary copy of this report, call 800-456-4994. For questions, call Dr. Simonson at (757) 238-7707, or e-mail him at [wsimonsonpharmd@aol.com](mailto:wsimonsonpharmd@aol.com). Publisher Peter Sonnenreich may be reached at (202) 246-2525.

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