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

Kikaku America International has released the 2008 *Senior Care Digest Interdisciplinary Report: A Survey of Long-Term Care Health Professionals*, an annual report of long-term care leaders, including medical directors, consultant pharmacists, directors of nursing (DONs), and nurse practitioners. The report, which is part of the sanofi-aventis Managed Care Digest Series[®], focuses on current issues such as the impact of Medicare Part D implementation, changes to the Nursing Facility Surveyor Guidelines, and interactions between the various disciplines.

Some key highlights from the report include:

- A growing number of practitioners have an active presence in assisted living facilities (ALFs). One-third of medical directors, for example, said they serve as a medical director or advisor in this setting, and half of medical directors reported seeing residents in an ALF. Likewise, one in four nurse practitioners (NPs) practices in an ALF.
- Practitioners—and their employers—increasingly see specialized certification as an important professional credential. One-third of pharmacists said they have earned the certified geriatric pharmacist (CGP) credential, while a similar percentage of medical directors have obtained the certified medical director (CMD) credential.
- A majority of respondents from each discipline believe that culture change—implementing physical and philosophical innovations to create a more home-like environment and increase resident choice and autonomy—would improve resident and staff satisfaction, quality of care, and quality of life. To date, many long-term

care practitioners have been involved in some sort of culture change—predominantly the development of policies and procedures focused on quality. However, they are commonly concerned that nursing home surveyors don't always understand these changes, possibly resulting in citations or other compliance issues.

- Medicare Part D continues to be on the minds of practitioners. The concerns they expressed in last year's survey continue to plague them. As in the 2007 survey, practitioners again expressed concern about Medicare Part D. Respondents from all disciplines indicated strong feelings that Part D has resulted in increased medication-related problems and worsened resident outcomes. They also indicated that prior authorization (PA) criteria for medications are difficult to meet and add to the challenges of ensuring quality medication therapy in a timely manner.
- Medication therapy management (MTM) services, designated in the same legislation that created Part D to better manage medications in high-risk patients, are slowly receiving formal attention. Approximately one-third of respondents said they have a formal policy and procedure for MTM in their facilities or practice.
- Respondents from all four disciplines agreed resoundingly that Tag F329—revised surveyor guidelines on unnecessary drugs—has encouraged recognition and appropriate modification of drug regimens that adversely affect residents' conditions.
- Respondents from all disciplines said they have regular communication with residents' families. In fact, three-quarters of DONs and nearly one-half of NPs said they have daily contact with family members. Smaller percentages of medical directors and pharmacists said they speak with families daily.

“It is both enlightening and inspiring to see how long-term care practitioners approach the numerous challenges they face with dedication, creativity, and enthusiasm,” says Senior Care Digest Executive Editor William Simonson, PharmD, FASCP, CGP. “This care setting is evolving—evidenced by the growth of assisted living and culture change

initiatives—as the aging population increases and more baby boomers enter their 60s. The survey results make it clear that these practitioners are working hard to ensure that all elderly patients—whether in the community or in long-term care facilities—enjoy high-quality care and optimal quality of life, now and in the future.”

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