

Wdowicki Talks **FALL PREVENTION**



Imagine preventing just one fall. It doesn't sound like much until you consider the broader picture. Falls too often start a cascade of illnesses and complications that lead to decline, loss of mobility, diminished quality of life and sometimes even death. PharMerica wants to help stop this cascade before it even starts and enable long-term care residents to enjoy life on their terms for as long as possible.

"We have committed the time and expertise to develop resources to prevent falls and fall-related injuries so we can keep residents out of the hospital and on the wellness track," says Marti Wdowicki, PharmD, PharMerica's Director of Clinical Operations – South Region.

Changing the Dynamic: Proactive Prevention

The company's fall prevention program, she says, "was borne from a desire to change the dynamic of how we interact as pharmacists to prevent falls. Historically, we played a retrospective role; that is, a resident would fall, the facility would send us the information, and a pharmacist would review the profile to try and identify any medications that might have contributed to the incident. The hope was that by replacing or discontinuing that medication, we could prevent future falls."

Marti recalls, "As a company, we asked the question: Is there a way to proactively impact the potential to fall? The falls risk calculator was our answer. We started with 36 different AHFS drug classifications, researched them thoroughly, and assigned a fall risk value to each accordingly. Then our data team built the logic so that we can run any resident's medication profile and, using the logic, generate a fall risk value for that individual."

She added, "We can use this every month or even every week to identify those residents who are at risk for falling. As a result, the community can incorporate those residents into their falls watch program."

This tool is valuable at all levels and for organizations of all sizes. As Marti notes, "A corporation can view at a glance which facilities have a greater number of residents with a potential to fall based on their medication profile. At the facility level, the wellness director can use it to identify and reduce fall risk on an individual basis for each at-risk resident. This is especially relevant now as residents become more mobile after months of isolation and inactivity due to COVID-19 that resulted in muscle wasting."

Additionally, the facility can request a falls review for a specific patient if they are concerned.

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Pharmacy Expertise at the Nexus

At the nexus of this effort, the pharmacist is perfectly positioned to help lead fall prevention efforts. As Marti says, "Pharmacists are highly trained medication experts. We have devised this program to make best use of the pharmacist's expertise as a key element of the falls prevention conversation."

PharMerica doesn't just have one or even a handful of pharmacists to provide this expertise. Marti observes, "We have over 250 trained pharmacists across the country whose expertise we can draw on. Having the ability to tap into that knowledge, experience and best practices is huge."

The company also has a corporate team with national resources, and pharmacists at all localities have access to these. At the same time, Marti says, "We are ingrained at the community level and know what they need." With PharMerica's team of expert pharmacists, national resources, local connections, and cutting-edge tools, there is no guesswork in fall risk assessment. It's all about confidence and results.

Integrating the pharmacist into fall prevention is a natural step, Marti stressed. "Facilities have always valued the role of the pharmacist in reviewing medications, so they trust them to look at the role of drugs in creating the potential for falls," she says, adding, "Medications are a potentially avoidable risk factor. If we can be proactive and eliminate some of these medications, we can help prevent the first fall from ever happening."

Embracing This Urgent Undertaking

With staffing shortages at an all-time high and budgets tight, it is challenging for facilities to create protocols and other resources as well as develop and implement education/training programs and materials designed to help prevent falls. PharMerica has done the work for them, using nationally respected expert sources and the latest clinical evidence. Having a pharmacy partner to help facilities address prevent falls, as well as other problems, can help ease the stress on staff, Marti suggests.

"The stories are all too common. Someone falls, goes into the hospital, and they don't come home," says Marti. "Practitioners and staff work hard to care for residents and take pride in being good caregivers. We want to help enable stories that don't end with a fall."

To learn more about how PharMerica is the long-term care pharmacy of choice offering innovative, comprehensive pharmacy services, visit pharmerica.com.

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Marti Wdowicki, PharmD is a Director of Clinical Operations with PharMerica. She has been with PharMerica since 1997, where she is involved in the implementation and enhancement of clinical activities including immunizations, medication therapy management services, and disease state management programs. She leads a team of four Managers of Clinical Operations servicing over 750 long-term care communities throughout a 19 state southern US area.