

Communication, Collaboration, Consistency: *Pharmacists Add Key Ingredients to Quality Care*



Excellence doesn't just happen. Ashley Guido, Chief Clinical Officer at Ciel Senior Living, works at it every day. In many ways, it's a labor of love. "I've worked in other fields, but senior care is where I belong. I love our residents, and I enjoy coaching and developing teams, as well as problem solving and working on quality improvement," she said, adding that she is grateful to have a strong team of experienced, dedicated professionals – including an excellent pharmacy provider – to collaborate with on a daily basis.

Creating Teams That Tackle Challenges

With the constantly changing regulatory climate and communities in different states with different regulations, keeping every team member informed, educated and equipped to stay in compliance, and ready for surveys on a moment's notice is a constant challenge. "We've been seeing more scrutiny in the states on senior communities. The biggest challenge is how we ensure we are operating in compliance day to day and managing these regulatory visits and expectations," Guido said.

One key to this is a strong, engaged team. Guido said, "We work with a great HR team that conducts internal recruiting and has an effective hiring process. We know competitive wages are important, but we really put our heads together as the leadership team and looked at other factors that make people want to come to work for us. We've created a cultural environment where people's skill sets and talents are fostered, and we seek feedback and provide benefits based on what's important to them." For instance, just last year, they launched a generous 401K matching program. "We've been very fortunate to stay on top of hiring and recruiting, but we never stop; and I think that's a winning philosophy," she said.

PharMerica: Communications and Education, When and Where They're Needed

Guido's team is successful partly because every link in the chain is strong. This includes PharMerica Senior Living. She recalled her introduction to the company: "I had a community that was not satisfied with their existing pharmacy provider. I didn't know much about long-term care pharmacies in the area, so I just did a quick neighborhood long term care pharmacy Google search." Before you could say "consultant pharmacist," the PharMerica Senior Living team met with Guido and impressed her with their services and capabilities, and she transitioned 10 of her facilities to the company as their premier pharmacy partner. She said, "That was seven years ago, and it's still an incredible partnership that I am tremendously grateful for."

Not only do Guido and her facilities have local PharMerica team members who are responsive and know her residents and staff; she also is pleased to have national PharMerica leadership teams who know senior living inside and out and have years of hands-on experience in the field. “It’s so rewarding to work with people who truly understand this space and can help us proactively navigate the challenges and identify and embrace opportunities,” she said.

In a world where change happens at a rapid-fire pace, quick, accurate and current communication and education, as well as national and local regulatory issues that are drilled down by state are keys to success; PharMerica Senior Living provides these to Guido and her team:

- ✓ **Quick, reliable response.** “Communication is key, and I always get a quick response from PharMerica Senior Living, and that has had a huge positive impact on our ability to serve our residents. Especially when new people join our leadership team, PharMerica Senior Living is there to help get them up and running. They stay on top of the ever-changing regulatory landscape and keep us in the loop,” Guido said.
- ✓ **Quality tools and resources.** Guido and her team rely on PharMerica’s Illuminate Platform for resources. She said, “When I get notices about their webinars, I blast those out to my communities so their team leaders can listen and take notes to share with their staff. They’re great programs and act as training tools.” She added that she regularly uses the “plethora of resources” from PharMerica, such as one-pagers, articles, e-books, checklists, best practices and other materials on topics such as medication errors, opioid use, antipsychotic reduction and antibiotic stewardship. She said, “These have been very helpful for our communities; and we get all these training tools, resources and refreshers for our teams so I don’t have to reinvent the wheel.” Illuminate, PharMerica’s education and thought leadership platform, Guido noted, gives everyone in her organization access to a full library of educational materials, tips and trends, programs and cutting-edge best practices on the issues, topics and challenges they face every day.
- ✓ **Training and support.** “Our neighborhood PharMerica Senior Living pharmacy team does a great job of supporting the various disciplines across our communities, based on which state they’re in and the rules and regulations about medication administration and management,” Guido observed, adding, “The pharmacists will come in and conduct cart audits, and they regularly provide education and training to our nurses and med techs on medication safety, med-pass, and much more.”
- ✓ **Safety.** As Ciel’s preferred pharmacy provider, PharMerica is used by the majority of residents. One reason for this, said Guido, is that PharMerica and its pharmacists help keep residents safe by creating a singular process for medication management, which reduces errors and ensures resident well-being.

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Ashley Guido, Chief Clinical Officer at Ciel Senior Living

Additionally, the pharmacist truly knows the residents and staff and maintains open communication in which everyone is comfortable asking for assistance or information, reporting a suspected side effect or adverse event, or requesting medication reviews or other support or guidance.

- ✓ **Insurance assistance:** PharMerica help residents navigate complex insurance plans to reduce costs and improve coverage. Each resident has their own personal billing expert available to them.
- ✓ **Polypharmacy initiative:** PharMerica's pharmacists review residents' medications to potentially reduce the number of prescriptions, streamline costs, prevent duplicative therapies, and reduce the risk of falls and adverse drug events. This not only contributes to resident safety and wellbeing but can also help reduce out-of-pocket expenses; and it can help make med-pass more efficient, freeing up nurses to spend more quality time with residents.

A strong and consistent thread running through all this involves comprehensive support, with dedicated account managers, routine on-site visits and 24/7 emergency services, plus the use of advanced medication management technologies, such as smart packaging and real-time pharmacy connections, to reduce errors and enhance safety.

Looking to the Future, Running with Opportunities

Senior and long-term care is a changing space, and Guido and her team – including PharMerica Senior Living – are ready. “We are seeing residents come to us a bit older, later, and typically with more medical complexities than in the past. At the same time, we have younger people coming into our memory care neighborhoods,” she said, adding, “We are offering support services to the greater community outside the walls of our buildings to educate the public about the value of senior housing when the need arises and the importance of planning ahead.”

There will be changes and challenges ahead, she admitted, and some of these will be unexpected and arise quickly. However, every link in Guido's chain of quality care is strong, and this enables everyone to face whatever comes with resilience, optimism, knowledge and passion.

About Ciel Senior Living

Ciel Senior Living is a leading seniors housing management company with over two decades of experience. We specialize in managing communities dedicated to independent living, assisted living, and memory care. Our communities are designed to help older adults connect, thrive, and live their best lives. We manage over 14 communities in nine states. Discover more at cielseniorliving.com.

About PharMerica Senior Living

PharMerica Senior Living, one of the nation's leading long-term care pharmacy services providers, combines national expertise with a neighborhood-focused approach. Our local team members, deeply rooted in their communities, bring a personal touch to every interaction. By offering personalized services and comprehensive clinical support, we enhance resident safety, ease care team burdens, and create thriving communities where seniors enjoy optimal quality of life. Discover more at pharmerica.com/senior-living.