

## Long-Term Care and Consulting Pharmacy

Consultant pharmacy practice is a discipline within the profession of pharmacy that has its roots in the provision of pharmacy services to nursing homes--now referred to as nursing facilities (NFs)--and other long-term care (LTC) environments.<sup>1</sup> While the concept of consultant pharmacy originated less than three decades ago, today more than 10,000 consultant pharmacists<sup>2</sup> provide a broad spectrum of administrative, distributive and clinical services to more than 1.7 million NF residents and hundreds of thousands of others in a wide variety of care environments such as community-based care, adult day care, correctional facilities and individuals living in their own homes. These people account for billions of dollars of medication expenses.

### What is a Consultant Pharmacist?

- A provider of pharmacy systems
- An educator
- A drug information resource
- A clinical practitioner
- A patient care advocate
- A member of the health care team

**Table 1-1 Selected Services Provided by Consultant Pharmacists** <sup>1,3</sup>

Primary Patient Care Services	Information/Education Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drug regimen review</li> <li>• Nutrition assessment/support services</li> <li>• Durable medical equipment (DME)</li> <li>• Surgical appliance fitting</li> <li>• Drug research programs</li> <li>• Pharmacokinetic dosing services</li> <li>• Pain management counseling</li> <li>• Patient counseling</li> <li>• Intravenous therapy services</li> <li>• Therapeutic drug monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality assurance programs</li> <li>• Drug information</li> <li>• Inservice education programs</li> <li>• Enteral feeding products</li> <li>• Outpatient compliance packaging</li> <li>• Home diagnostic services</li> <li>• Laboratory testing services</li> <li>• Medication delivery systems</li> <li>• Medical/surgical supplies</li> <li>• Quality assurance programs</li> <li>• Computer generated forms and reports</li> </ul>

## Work Settings for Consultant Pharmacists

Pharmacy consulting in these settings continues to attract the interest of health care professionals and the general public. The activities of consultant pharmacists have broadened the range of traditional pharmacy services. Federal regulations mandate pharmacist-performed drug regimen review (DRR) in nursing facilities and Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded (ICFMR). Pharmacists practicing in these and other areas are gaining greater professional recognition and satisfaction than ever before.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1-2: Selected Long-Term Care Settings for Consultant Pharmacists<sup>4</sup>**

- Nursing facilities
- Residential care/board and care
- Mental institutions
- Home health agencies
- Hospice care
- Correctional institutions
- Acute care hospitals
- Alcohol/drug rehabilitation centers
- Health maintenance organizations/preferred provider organizations
- Adult day care centers
- Ambulatory care/surgical care centers
- Life care facilities
- Industrial plants

### Consultant Pharmacists May Work in a Variety of Practice Formats:

- Community-Pharmacy Based
- Small Long-Term Care Provider
- Large Long-Term Care Provider
- Long-Term Care Corporation
- Hospital-Based Consultant Pharmacist
- Independent Consultant
- Specialty Consultant

Today, the practice environments and potential roles for consultant pharmacists have progressed far beyond what the most optimistic consultant pharmacist would have predicted 20 years ago. The most innovative consultants are employing other health professionals, including nurses, physicians, dietitians and laboratory personnel, in their practices. Advanced services offered by some consultant pharmacists include innovations such as software development, laboratory services, nutrition services, clinical research and the development of disease-based management protocols.<sup>5,6</sup>

Elderly patients are an especially important focus of consultant pharmacy practice, not only because of their rapidly growing numbers, but because they are more likely to suffer

from drug-related problems such as adverse drug reactions, drug interactions, excessive use of medications, and inappropriate and duplicative drug therapy. Consultant pharmacy practice is not synonymous with geriatric pharmacy practice; however, since the overwhelming majority of residents cared for in nursing facilities and other long-term care environments are elderly, consultant pharmacists must fully understand the proper use of drugs in this patient population.

Consultant pharmacy is not an exclusive practice area that is limited to a few elite individuals. Consultant practice does not require a particular academic degree. Any licensed pharmacist with the necessary qualities and motivation can become a consultant pharmacist.

### **Consultant Pharmacy: An Approach to Practice**

Consultant pharmacists, once relegated to reviewing nursing facility resident's charts in back rooms or offices, are today working on the floors of nursing facilities, interacting directly with residents and primary care providers. Those consultants who have been involved in practice long enough to see the evolution of their role can easily recognize the positive effects that hands-on pharmacy services are having on patient care.<sup>7</sup>

Pharmacists have grown to realize that people are different in real life from the way they appear in a medical record. They are aware that diseases and patient response to pharmacotherapy are frequently individual and not entirely "textbook," especially in the elderly. Because of this, consultant pharmacists must evaluate each resident as a whole. Residents must be considered holistically, rather than as several unrelated organ systems.<sup>7</sup>

### **How Can I Learn More about Consultant Pharmacy?**

For more detailed information on consultant pharmacy, please visit the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists' web site, <http://www.ascp.com>, or contact ASCP at 1321 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314, or (703) 739-1316.

### **References:**

1. Agnvall E, "[The Druggist Is In](#)", The Washington Post (Dec 14, 2004) Pg HE01.
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