



Why Assisted Living
Communities Should
**Prioritize Resident
Pharmacy Adoption**





Overview

Assisted living communities (ALs) are undergoing a shift, transitioning from their traditional role as group residential communities to delivering increased clinical care, often for an older adult population requiring more intensive support.

As ALs redefine how they care for community residents, they are facing a historic staffing crisis with the sector losing more than 14% of its workforce since early 2022¹. The shortage of workers and consistent staff turnover can hamper efforts to provide optimal care, furthering the strain on communities.

As a new era of care for ALs begins, ensuring residents embrace your partner pharmacy is one of the best solutions to help increase staff retention, safety, efficiency and coordination of care.

This guide will underscore why pharmacy adoption is vital and share the important benefits communities realize when residents select your partner pharmacy.

Changing AL demographics require stronger LTC pharmacy relationships

Traditionally, ALs supported a resident population that was primarily active and independent, but that is no longer the case. Residents now age-in and age-out of communities at a more advanced maturity — more than half of residents are over the age of 85 — and require higher-acuity care in a setting that was designed for lower-acuity support.

The demographic shift to a frailer population creates new levels of care and additional pharmacological challenges, with the average resident now taking 12 to 14 medications per day, and 87% requiring medication management assistance.

Overcoming many of the obstacles ALs currently face requires the support of a long-term care pharmacy that is designed to serve the multifaceted needs of the assisted living industry. The pharmacy should be an integral part of your Medication Management Team, offering a dedicated team of senior care pharmacy specialists who work together with your community nurses and residents' physicians. In this way, the pharmacy gets to know the unique needs of your community and can provide the tailored solutions to best support the residents in your care.





| Partner pharmacy adoption benefits

From enhanced safety and medication accuracy to help with prescription drug plans and billing, the benefits for residents who select an assisted living community's LTC partner pharmacy are inherent. The advantages of full resident adoption also extend to the community by increasing operational efficiency and staff satisfaction.

Safety is a top priority of all ALs, and pharmacy adoption supplements this primary goal through:

- **Increased medication management efficiency:** Adoption of a partner pharmacy delivers comprehensive prescription oversight and efficacy. Traditionally, new residents or those not using the community's partner pharmacy order their medications from a retail pharmacy or through the mail. Often, these medications are prescribed by various physicians and may be filled by multiple pharmacies. When added to the med cart, the inconsistent packaging can create the potential for medication errors and place added strain on limited or inexperienced staff. An LTC pharmacy provides consistent, intuitive packaging replacing the mix of containers that are cumbersome, disorganized and carry different labeling. It's barcoded and organized by date and time for safe easy distribution. Full adoption by residents ensures that there is one medication system in the med room, a single set of policies and procedures for new orders, and improved record keeping with all resident information housed in the same system.
- **Enhanced coordination of care:** An LTC pharmacy's medication management team can provide effective communication with doctors, community staff and family to enhance care. A standard delivery time and one medication storage system and point of communication eases processes for staff allowing them to focus on residents. Complete integration with the community's electronic health record (EHR) or eMAR provides seamless, accurate medication records. LTC pharmacists are uniquely qualified to reconcile medication lists across care settings reducing risk associated with transitions in care.
- **Reduced medication error rate:** The CDC states older adults visit emergency departments about 450,000 times a year due to adverse drug reactions². This risk can be minimized by increasing pharmacy adoption, allowing the community's partner pharmacy to have a 360-degree view of each resident's entire drug regimen, across all physicians. When residents use multiple doctors and pharmacies, a pharmacist only has access to the medications filled by that company, increasing the possibility for harmful interactions. Pharmacy adoption also creates a singular process to pass medications, further reducing the potential for errors and ensuring resident wellbeing.

Through the improvement of medication management efficiency, coordination of care and the mitigation of potential medication errors, adoption of an LTC pharmacy further augments the primary goal of ALs — keeping residents safe. The additional oversight of a partner pharmacy team and single processes for staff ensures positive outcomes for residents.



Pharmacy adoption bolsters staff retention amid workforce constraints

As ALs face staffing issues, prioritizing the full adoption of a partner pharmacy can help retain workers and enhance staff satisfaction by easing burdens, eliminating complications and reducing labor-intensive processes. Benefits include:

- **Reduced cost of labor:** Consistent packaging and a singular, efficient process can reduce med pass time by an estimated 30 seconds per resident, per administration. Compounded over time, this simplified process can save hours of labor each week, benefitting an AL's bottom line and staff's peace of mind. Pharmacy adoption also saves time and energy for staff as it reduces the communication needed to just one pharmacy for all resident needs. For instance, refill requests can be scanned, expediting and easing the reordering process.
- **Improved staff productivity and satisfaction:** Utilizing a single pharmacy partner specializing in long-term care improves workflow by reducing time-consuming tasks and providing the support to solve customer service and medication billing issues. In addition, pharmacy adoption decreases exhaustive training on various procedures, allowing staff to focus on what they do best — taking care of seniors.
- **Access to actionable, data-driven analytics:** Full pharmacy adoption allows staff and the LTC pharmacy to have access to a complete suite of data that can increase care efficacy. In addition to reviewing all resident's medication records and orders, other meaningful insights are available when all prescriptions are housed in a single system. Supplemental information can be gleaned, including cost reports, prescription price analyses and savings statements. Reports can also highlight antibiotic rates, psychotropic utilization or other factors to improve care.
- **Reduced compliance risk:** Eliminating compliance risks are particularly vital in an enhanced regulatory environment, and partner pharmacy adoption can help. Partner pharmacies can lead to a decline in potential med pass errors through a single administration process. They also mitigate compliance risks by housing all electronic health records (EHRs) in a single interface used by a community and its pharmacy. This one-system process can reduce possible eMAR omissions or errors that could lead to liability issues.

Resident participation matters: Your LTC pharmacy can help

Increasing resident pharmacy adoption rate offers a multitude of advantages, but ALs and residents will best realize the full value of the partnership when every resident elects to use the partner pharmacy. To help increase adoption, ALs must make sure their leadership is totally committed and have a comprehensive understanding of the benefits and value of their partner pharmacy so that they can communicate these advantages to their residents and responsible parties in a way that is compelling.

You should expect your LTC pharmacy partner to help and leverage their available resources to strengthen community efforts. They understand the challenges new and existing residents face when considering a switch to a new pharmacy and can provide excellent perspective.

At Guardian, we work in collaboration with the communities we serve developing strategies to boost resident participation. We help establish well-defined processes and implement a variety of programs that successfully increase pharmacy adoption.




Partner pharmacy adoption is favorable for all

Full pharmacy adoption is a “win-win” for residents and staff. Residents receive peace of mind knowing they have the right medication at the right time, medication combinations are safe and day-to-day pharmacy questions are answered. Staff has security knowing they have a trusted, local relationship that provides reliable medication access, processes and delivery times. Finally, both have confidence knowing the pharmacy will help navigate changes in pharmacy healthcare benefits and work with doctors and prescription drug plans to ensure medications are covered without hassle. This peace of mind, security and confidence leads to happier residents and caregivers.



¹ ACHA/NAACLS. (n.d.). *Historic staffing shortages continue to force nursing homes to limit new admissions, creating bottlenecks at hospitals and reducing access to care for seniors.* Press Releases. Retrieved July 18, 2022, from <https://www.ahcancal.org/News-and-Communications/Press-Releases/Pages/Historic-Staffing-Shortages-Continue-To-Force-Nursing-Homes-To-Limit-New-Admissions,-Creating-Bottlenecks-at-Hospitals-and.aspx>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017, October 11). *Adverse drug events in adults.* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved July 21, 2022, from https://www.cdc.gov/medicationsafety/adult_adversedrugevents.html

A caregiver in light blue scrubs is assisting an elderly woman with white hair who is sitting in a wheelchair. The caregiver is leaning over the wheelchair, holding the handlebars, and smiling at the woman. The woman is also smiling and looking towards the caregiver. They are outdoors on a paved surface with trees in the background. A large blue semi-transparent shape is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

Guardian Pharmacy Services is one of the nation's largest long-term care pharmacy companies providing outstanding client service and resident care to long-term care communities including assisted living, skilled nursing, behavioral health and those that serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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