



**LONG TERM CARE (LTC) E- NEWSLETTER – September 2012: Volume 10, Number 7**

Welcome to the [LTC E-NEWSLETTER](#), a monthly electronic newsletter of the [Long Term Care Community Coalition](#). Note to Readers: To go directly to an article, click on its page number in the Table of Contents. Once you are at the article, click on any underlined text for a link to more information or to send a message in “Spotlight on Advocacy.”

Please support LTCCC’s work to protect the frail elderly and disabled who rely on long term care.  
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**[Nursing Home Compare Undergoes Major Upgrade](#)**

Nursing Home Compare is the federal website that enables people to look up any home that accepts Medicare and/or Medicaid (virtually every nursing home in the country) and find out information on quality. The website recently underwent a major overhaul and was relaunched over the summer. It is now much easier to look up and compare nursing homes and to find out important information such as details on latest inspection reports, rates of antipsychotic drug use and direct care staffing levels.

Much of the new information is available as a result of the 2010 Affordable Care Act (so-called “Obamacare”), which included a number of important protections in the Nursing Home Transparency Act and the Elder Justice Act. [For more information on these protections [click here for LTCCC’s fact sheets](#), produced in partnership with [NY StateWide Senior Action](#).]

[<http://www.medicare.gov/NursingHomeCompare/>]

## **[ProPublica Launches Nursing Home Inspect Web-Based Tool](#)**

ProPublica, an independent nonprofit organization that conducts investigative journalism, has developed a web-based tool that allows users to search inspection reports for all nursing homes across the country. As noted above, these reports, referred to as Statements of Deficiencies, began to be posted on [Nursing Home Compare](#) in July. The Nursing Home Inspect tool allows users to search across the Statements of Deficiencies using key words. For instance, an individual interested in finding out about incidents of sexual assault can type that phrase into the search engine. It is important to note that this will result in instances in which the word or phrase appears in a Statement of Deficiency; it does not necessarily mean that the violation took place. LTCCC recommends that the public read the text of the citation for further information and context. In addition, it is critical to remember that nursing home problems often go unidentified and therefore will not appear.

[<http://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/>]

## **[AHRQ Review Finds Few Differences Between First- and Second-Generation Antipsychotics](#)**

The federal [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#) reports:

Few differences of clinical importance for outcomes related to effectiveness were found in a new review of first-generation and second-generation antipsychotics for adults with schizophrenia, schizophrenia-related psychoses, or bipolar disorder. The review, from AHRQ’s Effective Health Care Program, also found that outcomes such as death and quality of life were rarely assessed, and that data comparing side effects were sparse. Inconsistency in treatment comparisons, outcomes, outcome measurements, and patient populations across studies made drawing firm conclusions difficult. However, the research review provides extensive details of characteristics and methodological features of the studies that may help

inform individual treatment decisions. Select to access [Antipsychotics in Adults: Comparative Effectiveness of First-Generation versus Second-Generation Medications](#).

The inappropriate use of antipsychotics is a widespread problem in dementia care, particularly for nursing home residents. While this study focused on non-elderly adults, it has important implications regarding the use of these drugs in other populations, in particular the elderly. Since their development (mostly in the 1990s-2000s), second generation (also known as atypical) antipsychotics have been marketed as providing a significant improvement over the first generation of antipsychotics, in terms of both improved efficacy and decreased side effects. As a result, they have become widely used. Close to one in four nursing home residents have been given antipsychotics, despite significant risk of heart attack, stroke or death and the fact that they are not indicated to treat behavioral symptoms of Alzheimer's Disease or other dementia.

See the next article, below, for more information on the antipsychotic drugging issue.

[\[http://www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/search-for-guides-reviews-and-reports/?pageaction=displayproduct&productid=1053\]](http://www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/search-for-guides-reviews-and-reports/?pageaction=displayproduct&productid=1053)

## **[LTCCC Launches New Webpage Dedicated to Antipsychotic Drugs & Dementia Care: Resources and Information](#)**

Thirteen percent (13%) of all seniors suffer with Alzheimer's Disease, the most well known (but not the only) type of dementia. Among our growing numbers of older elderly (people 85 or older) 43% have Alzheimer's. Unfortunately for these individuals and their families, and despite the FDA's 'black box' warning, powerful and dangerous antipsychotic drugs are frequently used to treat symptoms of dementia. These antipsychotics are often used as a form of chemical restraint, to quiet these individuals so that they are more easy to care for, particularly in nursing homes, hospitals and assisted living. In addition to destroying social and emotional well-being, these drugs greatly increase risks of stroke, heart attack, Parkinsonism & falls.

The misuse of antipsychotic drugs in nursing homes in particular is a widespread yet preventable problem. As noted in the article above, approximately one in four nursing home residents are given these drugs every day. As the U.S. Inspector General Daniel Levinson noted, "Too many [nursing homes] fail to comply with federal regulations designed to prevent overmedication, giving nursing home patients antipsychotic drugs in ways that violate federal standards for unnecessary drug use." The Inspector General concluded, "Government, taxpayers, nursing home residents, as well as their families and caregivers should be outraged – and seek solutions."

In response to the [Inspector General's report](#), LTCCC and other consumer groups have been advocating for both federal and state action to address the inappropriate use of antipsychotics. In March 2012, the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services launched an antipsychotic drugging initiative. The national goal – which the nursing home industry has agreed to – is a reduction in antipsychotic drugging by 15% by the end of 2012.

LTCCC's new web page, [nursinghome411.org/?articleid=10042](http://www.nursinghome411.org/?articleid=10042), provides information and resources for consumers and other stakeholders on how to find out about a facility's drugging rates, federal requirements and the federal campaign.

[\[http://www.nursinghome411.org/?articleid=10042\]](http://www.nursinghome411.org/?articleid=10042)

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## **Spotlight on Advocacy: [Raise Awareness of Long Term Care \(and Other Healthcare\) Issues for the November Elections](#)**

The upcoming election will have major implications for healthcare issues, including important policies relating to long term care. LTCCC does not endorse political candidates. However, a central part of our mission is to raise awareness of, and promote, policies that improve long term care quality and accountability. The link above is to the [National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care's](#) website page, [Long-term Care Issues in the 2012 Presidential Election](#). It contains an excellent one-page brief on the LTC positions of the two major party presidential candidates.

Long term care issues often get little attention in the media. As described in LTCCC's [fact sheets on the Affordable Care Act](#) (so called ObamaCare), the Act provides a number of important improvements and protections for long term care consumers, from greater access to home and community based services to improved nursing home transparency and accountability.

We urge LTC E-News readers to be aware of these issues and to educate others about them.

## **We're on the Web!**

NEW!: [Materials on the Affordable Care Act and Mandatory Managed Long Term Care in New York](#)

[www.ltccc.org](http://www.ltccc.org): Our main website, with access to all of our issues, policy briefs and research.

[www.assisted-living411.org](http://www.assisted-living411.org): For information on assisted living, including consumer issues and policies.

[www.nursinghome411.org](http://www.nursinghome411.org): For information on developments in nursing home care, regulation and policy issues.

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## **LTCCC Links of Interest**

[View](#) the latest enforcement actions against nursing homes in New York State.

[Read](#) the latest edition of LTCCC's quarterly newsletter, The Monitor.

LTCCC study: Government Monitoring & Oversight of Nursing Home Care in [Word](#) or [PDF](#).

Long term care information booklet in [Chinese](#) and [English](#) for Chinese consumers: What You Need to Know about Long Term Care.

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