

US nursing homes reducing use of antipsychotic drugs

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Program tackling over-prescription to dementia patients is working, government data suggest.

(HealthDay)—A year-old nationwide effort to prevent the unnecessary use of antipsychotic medications in U.S. nursing homes already seems to be working, public health officials report, as facilities begin to opt for patient-centered approaches over drugs to treat dementia and other related complications.

So far, the program has seen more than a 9 percent drop in the national use of antipsychotics among long-term nursing-[home residents](#), when comparing the period of January to March 2013 with October to December 2011.

The National Partnership to Improve Dementia Care was launched in 2012 by the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). At issue: the broad over-prescription of antipsychotics among the nation's roughly 1.5 million nursing-home residents.

"This important partnership to improve [dementia care](#) in [nursing homes](#) is yielding results," Dr. Patrick Conway, CMS chief medical officer and director of the Center for Clinical Standards and Quality, said in an agency news release.

"We will continue to work with clinicians, caregivers and communities to improve care and eliminate harm for people living with [dementia](#)," Conway added.

As recently as 2010, more than 17 percent of nursing-home patients were being given daily doses of antipsychotic medications that were above recommended levels, according to the news release.

With that in mind, the campaign set out to provide enhanced dementia care training for nursing-home staff and statewide nursing-home assessors, by outlining alternative treatment options and making relevant antipsychotic medication information more easily accessible online on its Nursing Home Compare website.

The information provided is a collection of best-practices information gathered from a coalition of medical and quality-improvement experts, government agencies, consumer and patient advocates, and long-term-care providers.

The campaign's goal is to lower antipsychotic drug use by 15 percent by the end of this year.

To date, 11 states have realized—or even exceeded—this objective: Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Maine, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee and Vermont.

As a result, an estimated 30,000 fewer nursing-home patients are on [antipsychotics](#) today than would have been prior to the launch of the CMS information program.

More information: For more on the CMS partnership campaign to improve dementia care, visit [Advancing Excellence in American Nursing Homes](#).

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