



Starting the Year Right...

By Lynn Harrelson, R.Ph., FASCP
Senior Pharmacy Solutions
Medication Therapy Management Services
www.SeniorPharmacySolutions.com

Each of us welcomes the New Year in our special way. Collectively, we usually start each New Year with one or more resolutions and they often include a resolution that will affect our health.

Everyone wants a healthier future....better health with fewer problems or accidents. We all want fewer visits to healthcare providers, emergency rooms and hospitals, along with lower costs, the lists goes on and on. Better health frees up time and money that can be used for other interests.

Avoiding medication related problems is one of the biggest ways to improve healthcare and lower its costs. Medication related problems can be ranked as the 3rd or 4th costliest “condition” for people over 65. If the costs associated with medication related problems are grouped together, these costs rival the dollars spent on cardiovascular and Alzheimer diseases. In our country, it is incredible but we spend about the same on medication related problems as we do on the medications that we take.

Since medication related problems are one of our country’s highest healthcare costs for people over 65, it should be understandable that everyone would want to correct them. Regretfully, most people just don’t appreciate how one or more of their medications may be lessening the benefits of other medications or treatments and how their medications may be contributing to other healthcare problems.

Medication related problems can be arranged into various groups... doses that may be too high or those that don’t reach an effective blood level, medications used improperly, inconsistently, or used longer than needed. A medication related problem is also when a medication doesn’t produce the expected benefit or outcome for which it was prescribed. When a healthcare problem is overlooked,

unreported, or untreated it can also be considered a medication related problem. Drug interactions, adverse reactions or cumulative side effects that may result from a particular mix of medications are classified as medication related problems.

Many of the medication related problems are underappreciated or are thought to be unimportant because their effects are often assumed to be the natural process of aging. Today's seniors are living longer, with more medical conditions, seeing more healthcare providers, taking more medication, using more pharmacies. These and many more day to day situations can be contributing factors to medication related problems. The limited communication exchange between seniors and their healthcare providers can also lead to medication related problems. Many seniors don't speak up enough about what's going on with them and the medication that they use. Seniors often don't realize how they are feeling could be the result of one or more of the medications. Many seniors believe they feel the way they do simply because they are getting older rather than because of their medication, their dose or how they are using their medications.

Each of us needs to better understand that our medications are only a part of our health care plan. We also need to appreciate that medications many times do not cure our health problems but treat conditions and slow the decline in our health. We also need to better understand and appreciate that medications may be used differently to get better results and fewer side effects.

To achieve the results we desire in maintaining our health and prolonging our independence, the proper use of all medications at an optimal dose is essential. To reach this goal, it is necessary for each senior to learn all that they can about their unique group of medications, how they might respond to their medications over time and how they can achieve maximum benefit from the medications they use.

To achieve the goals of better health and fewer medication related problems, seniors are encouraged to seek the support and direction of a health care professional specially trained to address the results and side effects of unique combinations of medications and how each senior responds to them. Senior Care Pharmacists are specially

trained to address the medication related problem as detailed above, to support our patients in getting the greatest benefit from the medications they use and to promote their continued well being and independent living. Incorporating a Senior Care Pharmacist into your healthcare plan should be considered as part of your new year's resolution for better health.

