

Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Safer medication use highlighted during Seniors' Month *Website aims to combat adverse drug effects in older persons*

Markham... Adverse reactions to prescription drugs among older persons is a growing concern. To mark Seniors' Month this June, a group of organizations involved in seniors' care has launched a website to give healthcare workers advice about avoiding this serious problem. The site includes a list of potentially harmful medications along with safer alternatives, links to resources and background information.

"Some medications may cause harm in an older person and should be avoided or used cautiously with monitoring," said Dr Andrea Moser, current president of the Ontario Long Term Care Physicians. "Our ultimate goal is to see medication use in older persons achieve the desired therapeutic effect with fewer adverse effects."

"Pharmacists are keenly aware of the potentially dangerous effects medications can have on older patients. It's essential that we identify high-risk medications, monitor them and provide alternatives as required," added Janet McCutcheon, Chair of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association.

The Safe Medication Use in Older Persons Information Page was created by a group of physicians, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, nurses and others with expertise in seniors care. It is hosted on the Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada website (http://www.ismp-canada.org/beers_list/index.htm).

"Medications can save lives and improve quality of life, but they can also come with side-effects. Awareness among healthcare providers of medications that are poorly tolerated by elderly people can go a long way toward preventing adverse drug events," said Dr. Ben Chan, President and Chief Executive Officer, Health Quality Ontario

"Seniors in long term care have complex medical needs and many are on multiple medications. The physicians, pharmacists and staff in the homes are focused on quality care for the residents. It is important for all of us involved in seniors' care to remain vigilant about drug safety. We're very pleased to be an active partner in this important initiative," said Christina Bisanz, CEO of the Ontario Long Term Care Association.

The webpage is part of an awareness campaign designed to provide care team members in long-term care homes, hospitals and the community with information on medications that are poorly tolerated by older persons. The content of the site will be updated as new information becomes available.

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-- 2 --

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-- 30 --

Background

The OLTCA is Ontario's largest long term care association, representing 428 homes from the not-for-profit, charitable, hospital, municipal and private sectors. Together they provide personal care to more than 50,000 Ontario residents and employ almost 50,000 people