



NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact: Dannielle Carr
E-mail: dcarr@wiseandhealthyaging.org
Telephone: 310.394.9871, ext 448

WISE & Healthy Aging Hosts Dementia Without Drugs Symposium

Attendees to learn the clinical risks of using antipsychotic drugs to treat dementia in the elderly, explore non-pharmacological options that focus on patient comfort rather than control

SANTA MONICA (May 18, 2012) – A “chemical restraint.” That’s what medical experts have called the antipsychotic drugs so often used in the treatment of elderly patients with Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia. And in recent years, there has been a growing concern in the healthcare community that these “chemical restraints” not only have been overused in nursing homes and other facilities to control the challenging behaviors of dementia patients—they actually cause harm and nearly double the risk of death for seniors with dementia.

To address the problem of the widespread use of antipsychotic drugs in dementia care, and to explore effective alternatives, a ground-breaking symposium, “Dementia Care without Drugs,” will be held on Tuesday, June 5, 2012 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Skirball Cultural Center. The educational event is hosted by the Santa Monica-based social services agency WISE & Healthy Aging, and co-sponsored by California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform (CANHR), Bet Tzedek Legal Services, and Senior Care Training, announced WISE & Healthy Aging President and CEO Grace Cheng Braun.

Advocates for nursing home residents in California have long been in the forefront on the drugging issue, and CANHR launched a statewide campaign to end nursing home misuse of psychoactive drugs in August 2010. In March of this year, national attention came to the issue when the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Service announced its “National Initiative to Improve Behavioral Health and Reduce the Use of Antipsychotic Medications in Nursing Home Residents.”

Hosting the symposium was an effective way for WISE & Healthy Aging and its partners to increase awareness of the drugging issue and begin to change the culture of those that provide dementia care—including healthcare professionals, caregivers, families, government leaders, and the community at large, according to Molly Davies, MSW, WISE & Healthy Aging vice president of Elder Abuse Prevention and Ombudsman Services, who is spearheading the event.

Symposium attendees will learn to view the behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia, not as a disease, but rather as forms of communicating unmet needs—a key treatment concept. They will be informed of the clinical risks of using antipsychotic drugs to

treat dementia in elderly people and the legal requirements of using psychotropic drugs in nursing homes. And they will be introduced to non-pharmacological options for caring for people with dementia that are focused on comfort rather than control, learning how to implement these comfort-centered options into a daily caregiving practice.

The distinguished presenters will be Jonathan Evans, MD, MPH, FACP, CMD, Vice President of the American Medical Directors' Association, speaking on "Understanding and Approaching Challenging Behaviors in Dementia; Tena Alonzo, MA, Director of Research and Dementia Programs, Beatitudes, Phoenix, on "Adopting a Culture of Comfort"; and, presenting "The Least-Medicating Approach," Tony Chicotel, ESQ, MPP, Staff Attorney, CANHR, and Christopher Cherney, a California licensed nursing home administrator and expert witness in elder abuse litigation.

With a general admission of \$30 that includes lunch, parking, and materials, the program is open to all. In addition, professionals in six categories may earn continuing education credits (CEUs): licensed clinical social workers (LCSWs), licensed marriage and family therapists (LMFTs), attorneys, nursing home administrators, registered nurses (RNs), and licensed vocational nurses (LVNs).

"Ending the misuse of antipsychotic drugs is one of the leading issues of our times," said Michael Connors of CANHR. "The Symposium is a tremendous opportunity to learn from national experts about better ways to care for people who have dementia. It will benefit everyone involved in dementia care by teaching them how to replace often dangerous drugs with personalized, compassionate care.

For more information and to register for the Dementia Care without Drugs Symposium, please call Molly Davies at (310) 394-9871, ext. 431, or send an email to eapp@wiseandhealthyaging.org.

###

WISE & Healthy Aging is the result of the 2007 merger of WISE Senior Services and Center for Healthy Aging. With a combined 70 years' experience serving older adults, the nonprofit organization brings together a synergy of services, information, programs and support for seniors, those who care for them and the professionals who work with them. For more information, call (310) 394-9871 or visit www.wiseandhealthyaging.org.