

## Solutions to Common Issues

We are pleased to bring you the inaugural edition of our newsletter "Branching Out". The goal of this quarterly newsletter is to help communicate important and timely information on current issues in pharmacy practice to improve service and the overall care of the residents and staff that we serve. We hope you find the content useful and educational.

## What we've been doing...

Last quarter, Green Tree Pharmacy filled over 150,000 prescriptions for over 5500 residents at 120 facilities throughout Illinois. Our Dispensing and Consultant Pharmacists made over 4,500 recommendations in the last quarter optimizing medications to reduce possible adverse effects, drug interactions, unnecessary drugs, laboratory monitoring, and hospital readmissions.

## Suggestions/Comments...

We'd love to hear how we are doing and how we can better serve you. Call 1-800-913-8174 or visit [GreenTreePharm.com](http://GreenTreePharm.com) and send us a note!



## Highlights

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## News from Our Pharmacy Operations Team

### Hot Topics: Covid-19 Vaccine

As of December 2020, 55 million worldwide cases of COVID-19, and deaths are now at 1.33 million. Pfizer and Moderna have both completed Phase III trials for their COVID-19 vaccine candidate. Both work using the same mRNA technology – no use of actual virus or stem cell to create the vaccine. And "95% effective" in the third phase of the trials – as determined by day 7 following the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose. Tests on both vaccines were conducted on **more than 43,000** individuals with a broad mix of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, ages, and comorbidities.

- > **94%** efficacy in adults > 65 yrs
- Estimates show that the Covid-19 vaccine will need to be accepted by at least **70-80%** of the population to provide community immunity.

Vaccination clinics are already underway through the CDC Operation Warp Speed and Pharmacy Partnership Programs. Visit the Heritage Health Facebook page to view the COVID vaccine video series at [www.Facebook.com/HeritageOfCare](http://www.Facebook.com/HeritageOfCare)

### Pharmacy Team Spotlight:

#### Deb Charlier-Carr, CPhT

Deb joined our team in September of 2006 and now has been with us for 14 years. She is a certified pharmacy technician and is responsible for creating MARs/POSS along with other reports for our facilities. Her dedication to H to O and her fellow colleagues is unsurpassed. Deb continuously carries a smile and is always "Happy to Oblige". She is appreciated by all of us at Green Tree Pharmacy.



### New Products & Supply Issues

Flu Vaccine (Fluzone quadrivalent) is still available. Please reach out to Sydney Benson ([sbenson@heritageofcare.com](mailto:sbenson@heritageofcare.com)) to coordinate delivery if you need additional supply, or call Green tree Pharmacy at (309) 432-3451 (ext. 1036).

# Clinical Acorns and Guidelines

## Medication Safety Facts

Medication errors are a serious and pervasive problem. Studies suggest that one in five nursing home residents suffer from medical errors, and 37% of those medical errors are medication errors.

Though most medication errors have only minor health consequences, a small portion cause adverse drug effects that can be very harmful to the patient.

Green Tree Pharmacy recognizes this alarming statistic and strives to avoid potential errors with several safety checks routinely performed in our dispensing process. Look for tips on how to reduce medication events in this section of our newsletter to help us take a proactive approach to protect our residents.

## Rumor vs. Truth

### Rumor...

Levothyroxine must be taken in the morning without food.

### Truth...

It's true that levothyroxine isn't absorbed as well with food. However, if adherence is a concern, we suggest taking it at night when the stomach is likely empty again. This works as well as morning dosing. Consistency is the key.



## Clinical Focus: Anemia

- Anemia is a group of diseases classified by a decrease in Hgb or RBCs, resulting in a decreased oxygen carrying capacity of the blood.
- The World Health Organization classifies anemia as:
  - ✓ Men Hgb < 13 g/dL
  - ✓ Females Hgb < 12 g/dL
- Symptoms present over time and may be difficult to identify in the elderly
  - ✓ Weakness, fatigue, general malaise, and pallor of the skin and mucous membranes
  - ✓ Reliable sign in the older adult: conjunctival pallor
  - ✓ Treat ONLY if symptomatic
- **Anemia types (Microcytic)**
  - **Iron Deficiency Anemia**
    - ✓ Tongue smooth and red
    - ✓ Oral iron preferred
    - ✓ Continue iron for 3-6 months after anemia is resolved to replenish the body's iron stores
  - **Anemia of Chronic Disease**
    - ✓ Serum ferritin will be elevated (>100 ng/mL); and Hgb will remain low (rarely is Hgb < 10g/dL)
    - ✓ Consider de-prescribing iron
- **Anemia types (Megaloblastic)**
  - **B12 deficiency Anemia**
    - ✓ Tongue beefy red and sore
    - ✓ Neurologic symptoms
    - ✓ Treat with oral, IM, or SubQ cyanocobalamin until corrected.
  - **Folic Acid Deficiency Anemia**
    - ✓ Similar to B12 without the neurologic symptoms
    - ✓ 1 mg folic acid po daily x 4 weeks
- Your pharmacist will focus on residents with anemia as this condition can occur in up to 44% of the elderly. Anemia also contributes to increased hospital readmissions.

## Clinical News Update

You may start to see more residents without diabetes using SGLT2 inhibitors (*Invokana*, *Jardiance*, *Farxiga*, etc)...for heart failure or kidney disease. There is growing evidence that suggests these meds may improve outcomes when added to standard therapy. Until more research is complete, Green Tree pharmacists will continue to work with providers and emphasize maximizing standard medications first to manage these conditions.

## Antimicrobial Stewardship Tips

*Antimicrobial Stewardship* involves a set of coordinated strategies to optimize antimicrobial use to improve patient safety, improve outcomes, reduce and prevent the development of antimicrobial resistance, and decrease unnecessary costs.

Comprehensive antimicrobial stewardship programs have been shown to decrease antimicrobial use by 22% to 36%, limit the development and spread of antimicrobial-resistant bacteria, and create significant cost savings to the healthcare system.

According to national statistics, it is estimated that more than half of community antibiotic prescriptions may be unnecessary or inappropriate. Look for various tips in our newsletters in this section and recommendations from your Green Tree pharmacists and consultants to optimize our residents' antibiotic regimens which may include the medication, dose, and duration of treatment.

## Regulatory Update / Review

Were you aware that residents who are receiving palliative care (i.e. hospice) or skilled services (SNF) are **NOT** exempt from the 14-day PRN rule for psychotropic meds?

**All** residents of long term care facilities are included in the CMS 14 day PRN rule for psychotropic meds.