



Manage Challenging Resident Behaviors

A RESOURCE AND TRAINING GUIDE

Richard A. Bryan, BSN, RN, CCM

with

Kelly Smith Papa, BSN, RN

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CHAPTER 1

Identify and understand your
challenging residents

CHAPTER 1

Identify and understand your challenging residents

Each day, long-term care facilities and healthcare providers are presented with new challenges that compromise their ability to deliver care. These challenges include an ever-intensifying regulatory environment; decreasing reimbursement; professional liability insurance premiums in many instances that have increased by more than 250%; increasing labor, technology, supply, and pharmaceutical costs; and a growing shortage of qualified professionals. In addition to regulatory and environmental issues, healthcare providers are faced with having to meet the needs of a sicker and more complex resident population.

These challenges

- create a need for more resources
- increase the risk of negative encounters and outcomes
- increase the potential for staff dissatisfaction

Therefore, it is critical that all healthcare providers do what they can to address these challenges.

Identify with your residents

Many older adults are unable to perform basic physical functions, including walking a quarter mile; climbing 10 steps without resting; standing or being on their feet for about two hours; sitting for about

two hours; stooping, crouching, or kneeling; reaching up over their head; reaching out as if to shake someone's hand; using their fingers to grasp or handle; and lifting or carrying something as heavy as 10 pounds.

This highlights the realities of what we in healthcare must address on a daily basis. People with these issues compose a large part of the patient population that enters our facilities each day. This population, currently numbering approximately 35 million, is expected to double to 70 million over the next 30 years, with the fastest-growing segment being the age group 85 and older.

Previous statistical information leaves little doubt about why this particular population requires more of our resources and poses a significant risk for poor outcomes and decreased satisfaction. The sheer number of encounters with the healthcare systems raises the odds of an adverse event occurring. Add to that chronic disabilities, functional deficits, memory loss, and depression, and the risk rapidly climbs.

Areas of particular risk for residents include

- falls
- medication errors
- dehydration and skin breakdown
- increased confusion, leading to wandering or elopement
- depression, anxiety, or agitation

Each of these risks has potentially devastating consequences, and prevention efforts often require the commitment of extra resources.

Understand cultural differences

When caring for residents of different cultures within the same facility, it is important to be able to identify that needs from culture to culture may differ. Beliefs and opinions regarding end-of-life decision-making vary among social and cultural groups. They may have different perspectives on the

discussing of and planning for death, on informing residents that they are dying, and on the roles of individuals, family members, and physicians in end-of-life discussions.

When staff lack cultural competency, misunderstandings often occur between the family and staff caring for the resident. Such misunderstandings ultimately impede care, delay decisions, and affect both the physical health of the resident and the emotional well-being of the staff involved.

Language

One of the most significant challenges in caring for residents from diverse cultures is overcoming language barriers. Thirty-two million people in this country (or 13.8% of the population) speak a language other than English when at home, according to U.S. Census figures. Many of these individuals are or may become residents in our facilities and require interpreters to communicate about complex medical problems and care plans.

These interpreters must be qualified for the job—translation of a medical visit by an unqualified interpreter could lead to omissions, additions, substitutions, volunteered opinions, and errors in semantics, which could seriously affect care.

Note that, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights (OCR), those receiving federal funds have an obligation under Title VI to communicate effectively with those individuals with limited English proficiency. The agency has consistently set forth that "where language barriers cause persons with limited English proficiency to be excluded from or be denied equal access to health or social services, recipients may be required to take steps to provide language assistance to such persons."

Understand populations that bring specific challenges

The chronically mentally ill

According to the National Institutes of Mental Health estimates, approximately 28% of the U.S. population is affected by mental disorders in a given year. Of that number, 5.4% have "serious mental illness" and 2.6% have "severe and persistent mental illness."

In the context of a long-term care facility, chronically mentally ill residents require more detailed medication reviews and care-planning assessments than other residents.

Residents suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's disease

Dementia and Alzheimer's disease are among the major causes of challenging behavior in long-term care. The Alzheimer's Association estimates that close to 4.5 million Americans—and nearly half of all nursing home residents—have Alzheimer's.

Residents with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia can exhibit severe mood swings, combativeness, and wandering behaviors. They may be angry, agitated, or suspicious of staff members. They may have sudden changes in their personalities and become suspicious of caregivers. Your Alzheimer's resident may use wrong words or do things that do not make sense. They may ask you repeated questions about where they are and where their family is, and they may become angry when they cannot find personal objects.

Face the challenge

Managers in long-term care face many challenges every day. It is the reality of our world, yet it is the piece for which we were least prepared when we entered the profession.

Only through early identification of your facility's vulnerable points will you be able to take steps to meet the needs of your community members today and, more importantly, to be there for them in the future.

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