



# Caregiver Edition

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## ABOUT US

Eleven years ago, while working together in a Long Term Care facility's recreational department, we (Karlyn and Gail—owners of A+ Senior Care) came to the realization that despite their diverse backgrounds and cultures—the residents shared a common longing to age in their homes.

This shared desire was so strong it influenced us and changed the course of our careers.

As women who witnessed our mother's caring for their mothers, we wanted to afford the senior population—which we had come to love—the same opportunity to age at home and be cared for by loving, trustworthy, competent care-

givers. Though our life journey took us in different directions, the influence of those senior resident was a constant, we knew that we had found our life's purpose—it was just a matter of formalizing and implementing our plan the right time.

For us, A+ Senior Care means providing excellent, high quality care, to seniors in their homes—wherever home may be.

We truly believe that all of our clients are **individuals**, deserving of dignified, respectful and excellent care, or as we call it, client focused care.

Our enthusiasm about senior care has stood the test of time and life changes—we still be-

lieve that the desire expressed to us eleven years ago, is true for seniors today.

As we have become a part of that sandwich generation, who has the responsibility of caring for our children as well as our aging parents, we understand the complex issue of caregiving and approach our role of care providers with deep compassion and humility.

**Karlyn Williams**, holds a MS degree in Health Services Administration with years of home-care experience.

**Gail Jones**, holds a MS degree in Health Law & Policy with many years of Long Term Care experience.

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Sandy Gutterson

Sandy Gutterson, is a wife and mother of two daughters. She is a substitute teacher, who home-schooled her now adult daughters. Sandy has worked in a school setting for most of her life. She currently serves on the Education Board of Faith Christian School in Hamilton, New Jersey.

She has a Bachelor's degree in Education and loves people – with a special love for seniors. Sandy says that she gets wisdom and a deep sense of satisfaction from being a caregiver—as she puts it, “it is better to give than to receive.” Her clients value her humble, compassionate care; she can be counted on to show up, even during bad weather! We value Sandy's commitment to A+ service and think of her as one of our exceptional caregivers.



# Depression and Seniors BY Karlyn Williams

As we approach a new year, many of the challenges we faced in 2008 will likely carry over into 2009. Undoubtedly, we will have a few more new ones to tackle as well. Our goal as a Care Provider is to continue to write about issues that impact seniors, present ing information to our readers, not because we think you don't already know the answers, but because we think being reminded can't hurt.

In this month's column, I will focus on after holiday/winter depression. This is a season of time that often causes feelings of loneliness and dark emotions among seniors.

Winter means shorter daylight and poor weather conditions which hinders outdoor activities. In addition to those particular elements of winter, the holidays weigh in as an added trigger. While some cele-

brate with elaborate meals and reunions, many seniors have out-lived their friends, spouses, loved ones and the holiday is a poignant reminder of this fact.

For some the holidays' are a time of anxieties, feelings of loneliness and profound sadness. These holiday blues could occur regardless if a senior resides in their home of 30 years, or a long-term care facility.

## Polypharmacy: How Does This Affect You? BY Gail Jones

Polypharmacy is the use of many different medications by an individual. Adults over the age of 65 make up 13% of the total population, but consume 36% of all prescription drugs – this translates to an average of 5 prescription medications per adult, with 2 over the counter (non-prescription) medications used at the same time.

Seniors use more medications because illness is more prevalent as we age. So what is the danger of multiple drug usage if every medication you take is prescribed by a doctor, surely he or she must know if there is a possible problem?

Studies show that 30% of all hospitalizations are due to medication related causes. With an increased proclivity to illnesses, seniors often see many different doctors, if each doctor prescribes medication, and each did everything right, independent of each other, there could be adverse drug interactions. So what should you do? The experts recommend that you;

1. Share all medicinal usage information with all your doctors. Do not leave out any of the medicines you are using when filling out medical

history forms.

2. Fill out your medications at the same Pharmacy; this gives your Pharmacist a bird's eye view of your medicine cabinet and the ability to alert you to possible diverse effects.
3. Ask your Pharmacist, if a new prescription will affect the medicines you are currently taking. Don't assume the Pharmacist would have alerted you if there was a problem. Taking control of your health starts with asking questions. The Pharmacist may know more about the medication you are prescribed, than the prescribing Physician. Do not assume that the doctor prescribed it, so it must be right.
4. Ask for help if you need it. Caregivers can help with organizing your weekly medications. Dispose of expired and unused drugs; this will help to avoid possible future mistakes.
5. Use as prescribed. This perhaps is the most practical and necessary piece of advice that is often overlooked.

Adults over the age of 65 make up 13% of the total population, but consume 36% of all prescription drugs.

## Depression and Seniors cont.



In addition to memories of past holidays, seniors also experience anxieties about age related frailties that become more obvious during the winter months. Many are insecure about driving during changing weather and road conditions and avoid outings altogether.

Knowing that the holiday blues is prevalent among seniors, can help caregivers prepare a plan for coping. Caregivers – related or hired – have to be educated about symptoms of depression; lack of interest in food, usual hobbies, life, change in mood, erratic behaviors or lethargic responses to previously interesting daily activities, are a few signs of the onset of depression.

Family caregivers, when detecting these changes in

personality or mood, should communicate immediately with the senior's Primary Care Physician. If the senior person resides in a Long Term Care facility, detected changes in mood, appetite, and general disposition should be communicated to appropriate staff person. Follow-up on how concerns are being addressed, develop a plan of care for the senior person.

Knowing that this is a prevalent issue faced by seniors can help the caregiver be proactive and prepared. One tool to assist a senior through this time of depression is social interactions. Some individuals may prefer to socialize at home, where they have control of the situation, others may enjoy programs hosted by adult daycare centers, senior centers or other community hosted events. A caregiver may enjoy looking through family albums with their loved one or client, focus on positive experiences, go for a car ride, share a pet, send a hand-made card to family and friends, listen to favorite music and sing together,

attend a church program. Above all talk about the emotions which may be causing such distress.

As our country deals with current economic uncertainty, many seniors may be experiencing reminders of a time when they faced similar challenges – their depression could be brought on not just by the seasonal time, but by the reminder of past seasons of time. They may become anxious about their future and that of their adult children and grand-children. So, as caregivers and care providers, lets pay attention to each person we care for today, and wait for the answer to the question of - how are you doing today?

### Fun for Senior and Caregiver

#### Pina Colada Yogurt parfait

**PREPARATION:** Easy

**1/3 cup reduced-fat vanilla yogurt**

**1/2 cup crushed canned pineapple or canned mandarin oranges**

**1 tablespoon toasted coconut (see Tip)**

**Top yogurt with pineapple (or canned mandarin oranges) and coconut.**

**TIP:** To toast coconut: Place coconut in a small dry skillet and cook, stirring often, until golden, about 5 minutes or spread in a shallow baking dish and bake at 350°F until light golden and fragrant, 5 to 10 minutes.

## Polypharmacy: How Does This Affect You? cont.

There are reports of seniors rationing medications by splitting the dosage because they cannot afford the cost. This reduces the effectiveness and contributes to extending the illness.

As we age, our body changes, these changes affect its ability to absorb, distribute, metabolize and excrete medi-

cine, all of which are necessary for medication to work correctly - we have little control over these changes our bodies go through, so it is imperative that we control what we can – our behaviors. Being informed is in our control, and so is holding accountable for accuracy, those prescribe and provide our medications.

*Some of the information included in this article was provided by a seminar on minimizing Polypharmacy conducted by Devanshi Sheri a Clinical Pharmacist with Partners Pharmacy.*





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**Featured Resource for Seniors, Caregivers and  
healthcare professionals**

**[WWW.SENIORNETWORKPROVIDER.COM](http://WWW.SENIORNETWORKPROVIDER.COM)**

**Senior Network Provider is an online resource that gives a voice to seniors to contribute their thoughts as they reply to daily articles and weekly guest interviews.**

**Senior Network Provider also allows healthcare providers to educate seniors and their families about changes in the health care industry.**

## EVENTS IN YOUR AREA

**alzheimer's  association®**

the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

**The VOICE of Alzheimer's:  
*A personal journey defined***

January 21, 2009  
8am  
*Lucien's Manor*  
81 White Horse Pike  
Berlin, NJ 08009

**YOU AND A GUEST ARE INVITED TO ATTEND A  
COMPLIMENTARY WINTER BREAKFAST!  
Call Laura Loro at (856) 797-1212 to RSVP**

**HAMILTON TOWNSHIP SENIOR CENTER**

409 Cypress Lane, Hamilton, NJ 08619  
Phone: 609-890-3686

**January 26th—27th: AARP Driving Course  
Time: 12:00 PM—4:00 PM  
Cost: \$14 (Cash or Check)  
AARP member receive a \$2 discount.**

**AARP Tax Assistance  
Starts February 3rd, 2009  
Time: 8:30AM—11:30AM  
Every Tuesday  
Call 609-890-3686 for appointment**