



A National Community-Based Participatory



Collaborative Studies
of
Long-Term Care

CEAL – UNC Collaborative

Press Release

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WASHINGTON, DC -- The Center for Excellence in Assisted Living (CEAL) and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Collaborative Studies of Long-Term Care (UNC) are working together on a new project to more effectively integrate research with policy and practice to improve the quality of care in assisted living. These organizations have received a grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to launch an innovative new study of collaborative research that focuses on medication management.

“The practice and policy-making communities need to be involved in identifying and informing areas for assisted living research, so that projects focus on the most pressing areas, and the results can be translated into policies or practice recommendations,” said Jane Tilly from the Alzheimer’s Association and chair of CEAL’s Research Committee.

Sheryl Zimmerman, PhD, Professor in the School of Social Work at UNC and the project’s Principal Investigator, notes “As researchers, we’ve been impressed at how welcoming the assisted living community has been to work together to learn about care, and how to improve it. Researchers have been frustrated that findings from studies are not widely shared with those who might benefit from it.”

According to Tilly, to strengthen the value and usefulness of research, it is necessary to create and test effective models that involve all strategic stakeholders. The CEAL-UNC project involves the active collaboration and participation of the assisted living policy-making, practice and research communities in all phases of the research project. Results are expected to be immediately translatable in a form that can be adopted and sustained across a wide group of communities.

The two-year collaborative project will develop a widely applicable manual that details the processes for creating and sustaining an effective model of collaborative, participatory research in assisted living. To test the model, the group will focus on medication management -- a topic highly relevant to quality care in assisted living. Medication management is critical in assisted living because of the extensive use of medications by residents, the potential for medication-

related problems, and the lack of research about the essential features of effective practice in the area.

Zimmerman believes this research project will help address the communication gap between research and practice. “Given the similar goals of everyone involved, we’re hopeful that this project will set the standard and provide helpful guidance for all such work to come,” she said.

The UNC research team has conducted more than 20 studies of issues related to the health and well-being of assisted living residents and the quality of care since 1997. CEAL was founded in 2004 by 11 diverse national organizations committed to connecting the vast array of assisted living stakeholders to promote excellence in the assisted living field.