

## IN SUPPORT OF INCREASING AWARENESS AND EDUCATION ON THE EFFECTS OF POLYPHARMACY IN THE ELDERLY

### Abstract

The purpose of this resolution is to increase awareness and education on the effects of polypharmacy in the elderly population from a nursing perspective. This resolution defines polypharmacy and how it relates to poor quality of health. It is intended to emphasize the importance of nursing assessment, adverse effects, symptomology, and the nurse's role as a patient advocate. Communication plays a pivotal role as nurses act as not only patient advocates but as multidisciplinary team members. Ongoing professional development programs are essential for increasing awareness, knowledge, and empowering the nursing profession and their patients. Improved quality of life for elders is the overarching goal of increasing awareness and education on the effects of polypharmacy in the elderly.

*Keywords:* nursing, polypharmacy, elderly, advocate

**TOPIC: IN SUPPORT OF INCREASING AWARENESS AND EDUCATION ON THE EFFECTS OF POLYPHARMACY IN THE ELDERLY**

**SUBMITTED BY: Mercy College of Health Sciences**

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WHEREAS, “polypharmacy, the use of more medications than are clinically indicated is a problem that affects many older adults. Older adults are more prone to adverse drug reactions and drug-drug interactions due to physiological changes and multiple comorbidities” (Riker & Setter, 2012, p. 474); and

WHEREAS, “polypharmacy becomes problematic, such as when patients are prescribed too many medications by healthcare providers independently of each other” (Woodruff, 2010, p. 1); and

WHEREAS, “polypharmacy, defined as greater than 5 drugs is among the most obvious signs of risks in drug treatment, resulting in increased risks for inappropriate drug use and adverse drug reactions, followed by higher morbidity and hospitalization” (Olsson, Runnamo, & Engfeldt, 2012, p. 3); and

WHEREAS, “many older adults do not present with the common adverse effects associated with medications, but more of an increased ‘off’ feeling or contributions to many of the common geriatric syndromes such as an increase in confusion, urinary incontinence, increased weakness, and changes in sleeping patterns” (Riker & Setter, 2012, p. 477); and

WHEREAS, “the nurse can play an important role in helping to recognize and treat this iatrogenic disease. Nurses can partner with patients and providers to work toward management of polypharmacy”(Riker & Setter, 2012, p. 475); and

WHEREAS, “nurses have the perfect opportunity to observe their patients on a frequent and consistent basis. This allows nurses to more closely monitor the progression of symptoms and note when significant worsening has occurred. This can be reported to the appropriate primary care provider for further investigation as to the cause” (Riker & Setter, 2012, p. 478); and

WHEREAS, “nurses endorse patient autonomy and empowerment and consider patients to be active decision makers who have a responsibility in the management of their care. patients and their families may possess a number of beliefs that influence their interaction with prescribing professionals” (Crigger & Holcomb, 2008, p. 122); and

WHEREAS, “as a nurse, you can be pivotal in helping older patients manage their medications and prevent polypharmacy. The keys to reducing risks are information, instruction, and organization.” (Woodruff, 2010, p. 2); and

WHEREAS, “identifying those individuals at risk for medication problems, as well as implementing specific strategies in practice to reduce the problem, will enable clinicians to develop safe and evidenced-based medication regimens that minimize the risk of adverse drug reactions. Individualized approach to treating

WHEREAS, patients will provide a much safer and effective means of practicing and will improve patient's quality of life" (Planton & Edlund, 2009, p. 8); and "with careful patient assessment and prescribing, steps can be taken to reduce the problem, improving the patient experience, health outcomes and the patient quality of life" (Perry, 2011, p. 349); therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Iowa Association of Nursing Students encourage the inclusion of information in nursing curricula to educate and increase awareness of the effects of polypharmacy on the elderly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Iowa Association of Nursing Students will provide information at the annual convention and through its website if feasible, about educating nurses and multidisciplinary team members regarding the effects of polypharmacy on quality of life; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Iowa Association of Nursing Students send a copy of this resolution to the American Nurses Association, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the National Gerontological Nurses Association, the National League for Nursing, the National Organization for Associate Degree Nursing, the Iowa Board of Nursing, and all others deemed appropriate by the IANS Board of Directors.

September 30, 2013

IANS Board of Directors,

Per your request, the estimated costs associated with implementation of our resolution, *In Support of Increasing Awareness and Education on the Effects of Polypharmacy in the Elderly* would include any additional costs associated with printing of the newsletter, printing copies of the resolution and postage to mail to the recommended nursing organizations listed on the resolution and other organizations deemed feasible by the IANS Board of Directors. Listed below are the costs that can be anticipated:

6 copies of 2 page resolution @ \$.10 each = \$1.20

6 envelopes @ \$0.10 each = \$.60

Postage @ \$.46 per 6 packages = @ \$2.76

Total approximate anticipated costs = \$5.00

Respectfully,

Tracy Thompson, Paige Thompson, Juliet Becker, Madeline Reeves, and Morgan Decker

Mercy College Association of Nursing Students, Resolution Authors

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