

The Baron Report

Volume 3, Issue 6, 2002

This One is for You

PERSONAL CARER WORKERS

Through education sessions and attendance at many facilities we have the opportunity to meet and get to know a lot of Care Workers. Generally we find a dedicated group of people who want to do the best they can, who work darned hard and often feel they are the brunt of complaints and abuse.

Mention relatives to any of them and they will relate stories that might make one wonder why they put up with it. But they do because they know most are just grieving and therefore make more allowances than necessary.

Care Workers are the backbone of any aged care facility and yet it appears that they are often the last group to be recognised or treated to any form of peer based enrichment.

What do we mean? Simply there are a lot of conferences that are attended by CEO, DONs and the like, but not many Care Workers seem to attend. The topics are geared for the executives, as are the many extracurricular activities. Big money is spent on these functions.

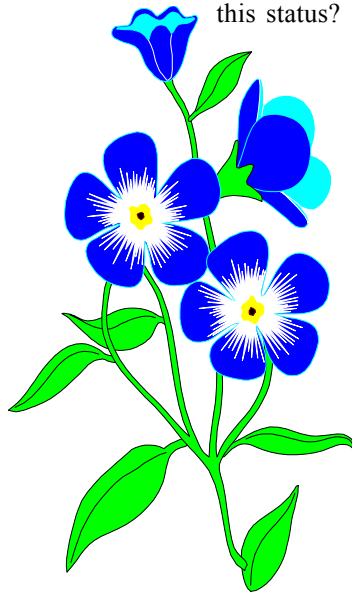
But what about the Care Worker. "Don't worry we will let you know what we learnt" is often the catch cry.

The old trickle down effect appears to be the only reward that many Carer

Workers receive. Some do not even receive that.

Yet there are a growing numbers of concerns that are directly related to Care Workers.

Firstly, they are unregulated or unlicensed workers. What does that mean and what benefits or otherwise do they get from this status?



Who would be the enforcer of any attempts to change this status and what might it mean to the Care Worker?

Educational levels vary from individual to individual despite attempts to determine some form of minimum standard. Does it matter if a Care Worker has a Certificate III or IV? What part does experience play over formal education. Grandfather

rights and future options vary.

While much discussion regarding the shortages of 'Nurses' little is said about the status of Care Workers. Many people believe, that like soldiers on the front line they are expendable, where as the officers must be protected at all costs.

No one is implying that RN's and EN's are not an important and necessary part of any aged care facility operation. Indeed, N & C Baron & Associates promotes this view at each and every opportunity. What we are merely stating is that the team also include Care Workers and that the better we can help to improve their lot, the smoother the whole operation will be.

"Being at the bottom of the heap", (their words not ours) means that bullying can come from many quarters.

In an attempt to address these issues and allow Carer Workers to be a part of this exciting awareness raising process we have organised a Carer's Conference.

Managers: this is a great opportunity to acknowledge Carers.

Carers: Circle the date on your calendar and ask to attend.

Who Cares for the Carers?

A one day user friendly conference especially developed for Personal Carers

Monday
March 24th
2003

Education
Development
Centre

Milner Street
Hindmarsh

0845 - 1500
Forget me Not

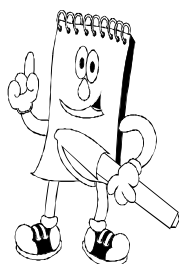
Current information for the Aged Care Industry

MANAGING PHARMACY PACKAGING ERRORS

by Carla Baron

Would you like to have something you have written or said published?

Simply mail, fax or e-mail us a copy with your details and we will try to make it happen.



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With the delegation of medication distribution and administration to Enrolled Nurses and Carer Workers, many facilities moved to the use of multi dose packaging systems to enhance safety for both the staff member and resident.

Now however many facilities are reporting concern over repeated pharmacy-packaging errors and are grappling with how best to manage these.

Taken from a standards perspective there are two major issues that should be addressed: 1.9 External Services and 2.7 Medication Management.

You have a contract with your pharmacy service which should specify the service expected. You (or the resident) are paying for this service and as any customer you have the right to expect value for your money.

It would be expected that if there are repeated problems that you would address these even to the point of changing service if quality can not be assured.

This raises a question for some about just what is an acceptable level of service. Is there an acceptable level of error? We have asked this

question of the Pharmaceutical Branch of the Department of Human Services and their response is similar to the views that



apply to nurses. There is no acceptable level of error but as human beings it is acknowledged that some error will occur.

As with internal medication errors an incident reporting system should be in place to identify and track problems, put remedial action in place and reduce or eliminate future errors.

In some instances people have chosen to use a Hazard Report for pharmacy errors in the belief that by finding the packaging error, they have identified a hazard and avoided an error reaching the resident.

In some facilities, this is preferable in that upper management and governing bodies are more attuned to hazard management and

inclined to act where they see medication management as the nurses responsibility. Either approach is acceptable as long as it results in remedial action.

The real issue is safety for residents and meeting our duty of care.

While facilities are paying for a pharmacy service they should not have to invest additional funds checking to see that the service is correct in its delivery.

BUT, if we are aware of repeated errors we could well be considered negligent if we don't take some preventative action. From a risk management viewpoint, a facility would be mad not to do something.

The purpose of this article is not to cause problems between facilities, nurses and pharmacists but to ensure the safety of staff and residents.

If you have issues you wish to discuss further, do not hesitate to contact us.

Likewise we would be delighted to receive feedback from facilities or pharmacies about how they have effectively addressed these issues.

Three actions facilities may want to consider:

One

Discuss with your pharmacy service charging back time taken to check on the efficacy of their service.

Two

Consider changing pharmacies; shop around

and find out which pharmacies are providing other facilities with good service.

Three

If there is a major problem, report the Pharmaceutical Board. The

Department of Human Services makes the point that if one of your staff is not meeting requirements, they are called to account.

If a pharmacist is in their own business, the way to ensure accountability is through the Board.

Medication Management - Specified Services

No Answers YET

The issue of medication management and specified services has engendered a myriad of questions from people who seem to believe that nothing is happening. "What is happening now" and "what are we to do" being the most common. A high level of uncertainty exists.

At a special forum hosted by N & C Baron & Associates on June 21st and at our annual *Thorny Issues* Conference on July 17th 2002 we undertook to facilitate a follow-up session in October to determine what progress had resulted. This vital session did not happen because peak bodies and government instrumentalities determined that they

would handle the matter themselves and declined this offer.

In following up the issue in November it appears that the wheels are turning, albeit slowly by some standards.

Both the State Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aging (DH&A) advise that they are meeting and working to ensure an outcome that will be both satisfactory and consistent.

The peak bodies have been consulted but indicated to us that we needed to contact the State and Commonwealth Departments directly for information.

Bronte Earl (DH & A)

replied that *"one of our people in Canberra suggested that you might like to add in somewhere (that) approved providers must meet their obligation under the Aged Care Act 1997 (the Act) and the Principles made under the Act, this includes meeting the health, well being and safety needs of residents at all times. ' Also there is no simple solution to the matter of medication management as State & Commonwealth legislation as well as the requirements of the regulatory body need to be taken into account."*

While nobody wants a quick fix band-aid solution it is important that issues are addressed in a timely manner and that day to day uncertainty experienced by those at the coal face is reduced or diminished.

Until such time as definitive guidance is available **"appropriate risk management strategies based on the resident's need in each facility is the broadly accepted position"** as indicated by the Department of Health and Ageing and the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency.

We will continue to keep you abreast of any happenings.

Websites - Worth Visiting

We know that a lot of you, by your own admission, don't use your computers much. Yet like riding a bike the more that you use your computers, the easier it becomes. Yes I know you don't ride a bike much either. What, pray tell, do you do with all your time?

Seriously there are some terrific sites that your should locate and visit as the information could be of great help. To assist you we will try and include sites in upcoming editions.



Our home site and one that can direct you to others
www.ncbaron.com

A new site developed by Adrian Hill of Comprehensive Kitchen Services that is well worth a visit
www.somefoodforthought.com

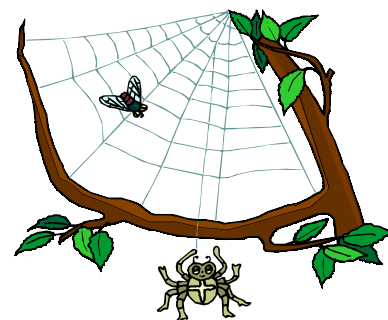
The Commonwealth Government has a site that lists its publications.
www.health.gov.au/acc/publicat/sppubs.htm

We hope you are all keeping up with the Accreditation results, (they are slow in coming) but for those who haven't had a look go to
www.accreditation.aust.com

Finally for a lighter aspect, and a great one to pass on info to your residents (e.g what word do 99% of Ivy League College graduates pronounce incorrectly. Don't know?

The answer is: incorrectly.

Give this one a try www.coolquiz.com



How Does Your Facility Measure Up?

Expected Outcome 1.6: There are appropriately skilled and qualified staff *sufficient* to ensure that services are delivered in accordance with these standards

More and more the question arises: "What is sufficient?"

Some try to refer back to the days of CAM/SAM funding to try to find an answer. Others are looking at how they measure up against others as an indicator. Most admit to struggling over the whole issue.

The Australian Nursing Federation (ANF)

have indicated a strong view and is advocating for set minimum care hours and have placed the issue firmly on the agenda of this round of Enterprise Bargaining for Registered and Enrolled Nurses.

N & C Baron & Associates have been asked to undertake a single-issue specific benchmarking exercise on this vital matter to help facilities put their own

position in perspective.

Costs and input will be kept minimal. Results are expected to be available February, therefore a need to act quickly. Some issues can

not wait for holiday times to be over.

Enquiries or expressions of interest to Neil or Carla. Quickly.



Work Cover Corporation Pamphlet

Recently while visiting Workcover I noticed a brochure, entitled *Have you got a problem at work?* that looked interesting. Never one to let an opportunity slip away I asked Angela Sparrow, the aged care expert at WorkCover, if it was possible to either reproduce the pamphlet or get copies for distribution. The pamphlet covers work injuries, unfair dismissal and discrimination or sexual harassment.

Quick as a wink she had organised them, thereby allowing all facilities in South Australia to have their own copy. Now you may have seen this publication before, indeed you might even be using it. If not have a look or better still post it on staff notice boards.

SEASONS GREETINGS

Once again the festive season is upon us and the end of another year approaches. This time is often an ideal opportunity for reflection on our achievements, frustrations and disappointments of the recent past and an opportunity to plan for the days ahead. Good use of time, really.

During the year we are able to see many of you, either at work or at various functions and are always bolstered by your kind words, praise and continued support. We do try hard to

meet your expectations.

In line with that wisdom we would like to take a minute to say thanks to all of you for the wonderful job that you have done, the time and effort you have contributed to make the lives of others that little bit better.

We have had a great year in providing advise, support and education to many in the industry. These activities will again be a feature in the new year.

We wish to applaud the many facilities that were able to

gain increased allocations in the last round, particularly those that we were able to assist through consultation and report writing. See it was fun, really.

Recently we have had a new addition to the team with our daughter, Tracy, having now completed her Bachelor of Science degree from Adelaide University now involved in many of the day to day activities while dedicating time to the development of the video production area.

Enough about us, and on to you.

Have a lovely festive season, take a moment or two to relax and rejuvenate, to applaud your successes and to formulate a workable plan for the coming year.

Cheers and all the best we hope to catch up in 2003.

the
Baron
Team

