

CALIFORNIA ADVOCATES FOR NURSING HOME REFORM

TOXIC MEDICINE! CANHR Releases New Guide to Fighting the Misuse of Psychoactive Drugs in California Nursing Homes

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 25, 2010, San Francisco

California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform (CANHR) is pleased to announce the release of **"Toxic Medicine: What You Should Know to Fight the Misuse of Psychoactive Drugs in Nursing Homes."** The new guidebook covers all of the basics regarding psychoactive drugs in nursing homes, from a description of their uses and side effects to an examination of the applicable laws. Most importantly, the guide gives practical tips for nursing home residents or their family members to prevent misuse of psychoactive drugs.

There is rampant misuse of psychoactive drugs in California nursing homes. Nearly 60% of all California nursing home residents are given psychoactive drugs, a 30% increase since 2000. Many psychoactive medications have dangerous side effects, especially antipsychotic drugs. Tens of thousands of nursing home residents with dementia receive powerful antipsychotic drugs that are not intended or approved for their medical conditions. Rather, the drugs are often used to sedate and control them, a terrible substitute for the individualized care they need and deserve.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued its most dire warning – known as a black box warning – that antipsychotic drugs cause elders with dementia to die. Antipsychotic drugs don't just hasten death, they often turn residents into people their own families barely recognize by dulling their memories, sapping their personalities and crushing their spirits. When families win battles to take residents off these drugs, they sometimes find that the person they've always known is still there. As one resident's daughter told us, "I got my dad back."

The increased use of psychoactive drugs in nursing homes has been accompanied by an epidemic disregard for the rights of residents to give or withhold their informed consent. Despite legal requirements, the informed consent of residents or their representatives is often ignored. It is possible to stop a loved one from being drugged by a nursing home.

This Guide provides consumers with important facts about psychoactive drugs and advice on how to stop their inappropriate use.

Releasing the guide is just the first stage of CANHR's 2010 Campaign to End Inappropriate Drugging of California Nursing Home Residents.

In the next few weeks, CANHR will announce additional actions it is taking to fight this epidemic and let consumers know how they can help.

The Toxic Medicine Guide is available [online at CANHR's Web site](#).

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