

# C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy Network Newsletter

Issue 8



C.A.R.E.S. Team Members at the APA Mid Winter Meeting (left to right): Tessa Hastings, Lindsey Hohmann, and Yi Zhao



Please visit the  
C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy  
Network webpage at:  
[https://  
alpharmacycares.org/](https://alpharmacycares.org/)

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Hello C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy Network members! We have some exciting news to share with you all. The final article in the C.A.R.E.S. three part series is now available! This article 1-hour CE article describes the various programs that are available through the Alabama Department of Senior Services to help your patients. From nutrition to care giver support to prescription assistance, check out this article to learn more about services that might benefit your patients! Remember- each time you send in a referral through the C.A.R.E.S. network, your patients are screened for ALL of these services! As always, if you need more referral cards and/or pre-stamped envelopes, please let us know!

In this issue, we would like to highlight our featured member, Dr. Kelly Tate, a Walgreens Health Outcomes Pharmacist and Ms. Linda Newkirk, SHIP Program Director from the Northwest Alabama Council of Governments. Read more about these outstanding individuals on pages 4 and 5!

Moving forward we will be bringing to your attention issues related to Medicare fraud. You may be aware of fraud cases happening in Alabama and across the nation, particularly related to opioid abuse and misuse. More recently, cases have come to light involving genetic testing. We hope to bring you information related to Medicare fraud that you can use to 1) help your patients avoid becoming a victim of fraud and 2) help you become aware of what constitutes fraud so that you can report suspected cases.

We are excited to meet up with you all once again during the Alabama Pharmacy Association's Annual Convention and Trade

Show in Destin, FL June 9-12, 2019. Please stop by our booth to pick up a copy of our latest CE and let us know how we can improve the C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy Network to meet your and your patients' needs. We are also excited to announce we will be offering a 1.5-hour Live CE during the meeting! Join us on Tuesday the 11th from 2:00-3:30pm to participate in our Live CE, *Assisting Medicare Patients with Limited Income: The Role of the Pharmacist*. This session will include a simulation, "Living the Life of a Medicare Patient" to help you understand some of the difficult decisions your patients have to make on a limited income. Participation is limited to the first 50 pharmacists! Check out page 4 to learn more!

Once again, we thank you for your continued participation in our growing network.



Salisa Westrick, PhD  
Sterling Professor  
Health Outcomes  
Research and Policy

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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## Medicare Fraud and Opioid Abuse Yi Zhao, MS, PhD Student

Medicare fraud has continuously caused significant social injustice, impaired distribution and waste of financial resources. The yearly financial loss due to Medicare fraud has been estimated at \$54 billion. In recent years, the number of Medicare fraud cases has been continuously increasing, from 797 cases in 2008 to 1,430 cases in 2011. The year 2010 has witnessed 7,848 subjects in investigation of Medicare fraud crime. Among them 25% were medical facilities and 16% were medical equipment suppliers [1]. A serious area of fraud concern is personal care services (PCS). PCS are services provided by a Personal Care Worker to assist patients with Activities of Daily Living and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living. These activities might include bathing, dressing, feeding, etc. Among the fraud convictions in 2017, there were 1,157 cases of this type. Among which, 523 involved PCS attendants and agencies, 88 in nursing, 54 home health agencies, and others

including mental health facilities and family practice physicians [2].



Opioid abuse and misuse has been identified as a significant public health issue. Opioid abuse and misuse is also a concern in relation to fraud in Medicare. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the opioid epidemic caused more than 42,000 deaths due to opioid misuse in the United States in 2016. In addition, nearly 460,000 patients covered by

Medicare received high amounts of opioids in 2017, and as many as 71,000 were vulnerable to misuse or overdose [2]. In June 2018, the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, along with state and federal law enforcement partners, started a nationwide health care fraud takedown. More than 1,000 law enforcement personnel participated in this operation, including 350 Office of Inspector General (OIG) special agents. 601 defendants were charged including 165 medical professionals, which resulted in a \$2 billion loss. In this process, 587 exclusion notices were made including 67 physicians, 402 nurses, and 40 pharmacy staff. Many of these cases aggravated the opioid epidemic through unlawful distribution of prescription painkillers and questionable prescribing [3].

Several health care providers were charged in a \$ 9.6 million opioid distribution conspiracy in 2018. From 01/2015 to 03/2018, these pharmacists and doctors conspired to issue and dispense prescription opioids for supposed patients, who did not have a lawful medical need for drugs. In this case, Tibus (defendant) took supposed patients to Precare Pharmacy, Global Health Pharmacy, in which

Sodiya-Ogundipe, Rafi and Fabode (pharmacists) dispensed the drugs. Finally Tibus obtained the drugs and sold them on the street. According to Attorney Schneider, diversion of prescription pills towards street market is a direct cause of the opioid epidemic across the country, and he is working on charging physicians, pharmacists, and networks who contribute to the epidemic [5].

OIG is still the leading force that inspects opioid related Medicare fraud. In order to detect this fraud, OIG conducts state-of-the-art data analytics and algorithms to identify the most egregious providers for further scrutiny by OIG and its partners. OIG also investigates on its own, and cooperates with its law enforcement partners to enforce laws against fraud. OIG shares databases, statistics, risk score models and methodology with other law enforcement partners, state entities, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, fraud organizations, and the Healthcare Fraud Public Private Partnership.

**As a pharmacist you can help reduce Medicare fraud by reporting suspected cases.**

**Report suspected fraud by:**

- 1. Calling 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048**
- 2. Report it online to the Office of the Inspector General.**
- 3. Calling the Office of the Inspector General at 1-800-HHS-TIPS (1-800-447-8477).  
TTY: 1-800-377-4950.**

**Reference**

[1] C. Hill, A. Hunter, L. Johnson, A. Coustasse, Medicare Fraud in the United States: Can it Ever be Stopped? Health Care Manager 33(3), 254-260

[2] U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Inspector General, March 2018 OEI-091800180

[3] U.S. News, U.S. charges hundreds in major health care fraud, opioid crackdown, by Reuters, June 28, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/u-s-charges-hundreds-major-healthcare-fraud-opioid-crackdown-n887436>

[4] The Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, 2018 National Health Care Fraud Takedown, [https://oig.hhs.gov/newsroom/media-materials/2018/takedown/2018HealthCareTakedown\\_FactSheet.pdf](https://oig.hhs.gov/newsroom/media-materials/2018/takedown/2018HealthCareTakedown_FactSheet.pdf)

[5] Timothy J. Plancon, U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration, Several charged in \$ 9.6 million opioid distribution conspiracy, June 01, 2018 <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2018/06/01/several-charged-96-million-opioid-distribution-conspiracy>

[6] Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Combatting the Opioid Epidemic, <https://oig.hhs.gov/reports-and-publications/featured-topics/opioids/>



## Featured Pharmacy Member Kelly Tate, PharmD Walgreens Health Outcomes Pharmacist

Kelly Tate received her B.S. in Biology in 1999 from the University of Alabama and her Doctor of Pharmacy degree from Samford University McWhorter School of Pharmacy in 2004. When she first graduated, she helped to open Publix Pharmacy in Cahaba Heights. In April of 2005, she started working for Walgreens Pharmacy at the Doug Baker location. She has also worked as a consultant in long-term care on a part-time basis. Her most recent position with Walgreens is the role of Health Outcomes Pharmacist.

Kelly's current role as a Health Outcomes Pharmacist with Walgreens began in February 2019. She is responsible for conducting medication reviews with patients who have been determined to have medication adherence issues. Her main focus is to try to find the root cause of their non-adherence, so that she can offer support to help the patient overcome whatever barriers may exist. Working with patients to overcome these barriers, Kelly has found that cost is one of the more common barriers. Kelly says, "I am in contact with several patients on a daily basis who have trouble paying for their prescriptions, which means they sometimes cannot purchase their medications when they are due to be filled. I wanted to have an option for my patients who struggle to afford insurance and their medications." Therefore, Kelly will be using the C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy Network to connect her patients with the Aging and Disability Resource Center so they can receive the assistance they need to afford their medications.

## Join us for a LIVE C.A.R.E.S. CE at APA Annual Convention in Destin, FL!



This past March, Alabama pharmacists had the opportunity to participate in our Live CE, *Assisting Medicare Patients with Limited Income: The Role of the Pharmacist*. Through this program, pharmacists learned how to help patients with limited income, and how to appreciate the choices they have to make when they have limited income through a simulation activity. If you are planning to attend the Alabama Pharmacy Association (APA) Annual Convention and Trade Show this June in Destin, FL we will be repeating this CE Tuesday, June 11th from 2:00-3:45pm. Participation is limited to the first fifty pharmacists! For more information about APA, please visit: <https://www.aparx.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=1213297>

We hope to see you there!

***SHIP Spotlight*****Linda Newkirk****SHIP Program Director/ Aging Services**

the position of SHIP/Cares Assistant. Just three months later, in June 2005, she assumed the position of SHIP Coordinator full time. This occurred as the roll-out of Medicare Part D began. Her title changed to SHIP Program Director/Aging Services in January 2015 when she took on the additional duties of supervising the SenioRx program.



Prior to this, Linda worked 33 years for the VF Corporation in Lebanon, Missouri before transferring to the Florence, AL location. She began with VF in Payroll, promoted to Payroll Manager, Office Manager, and Area Executive Secretary to four Area Directors. The plant was closed in 2002 when business went to Mexico. While waiting to secure another position, she decided to volunteer her time with the SenioRx program.

Her interest was peaked when she learned about the free medication programs offered through SenioRx. This was particularly interesting to Linda because of her connection with the Shoals Alabama Kidney

Foundation, where she served as Secretary and Treasurer.

She wanted to volunteer with SenioRx in hopes of assisting the kidney patients she worked with in affording their medications.

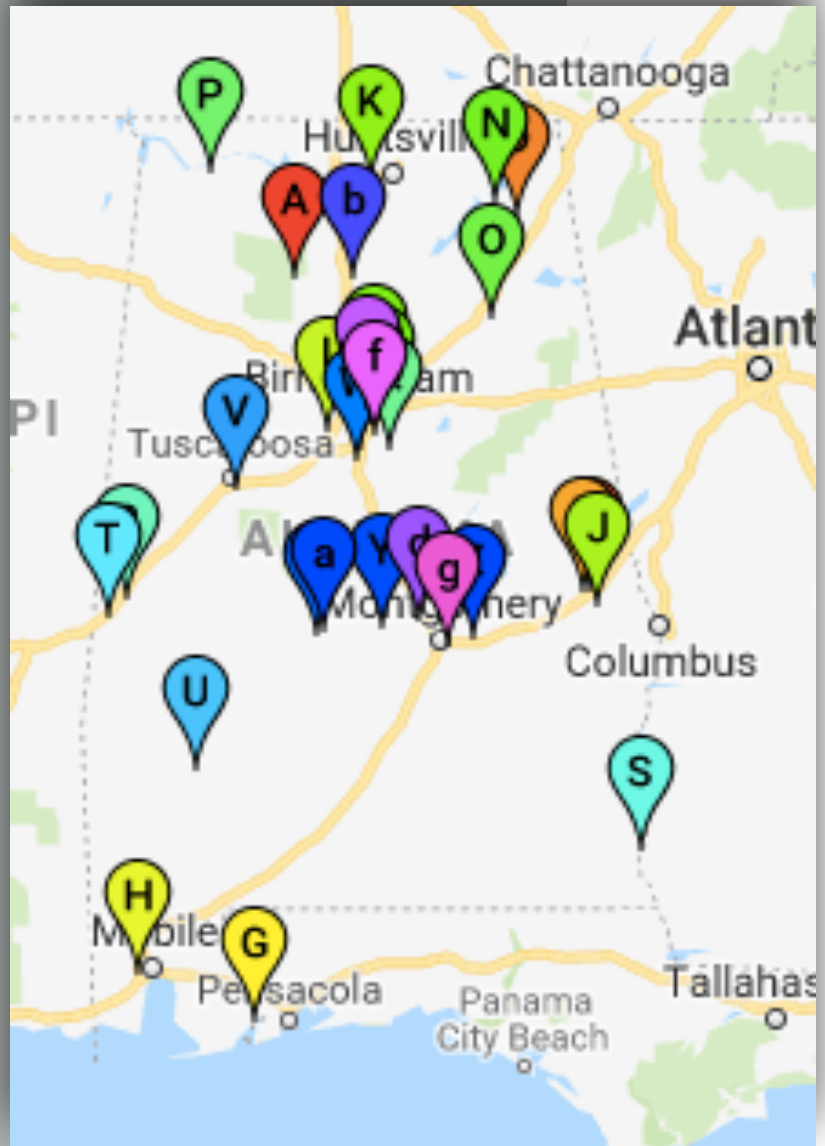
Linda loves helping others, so when a full-time position became available, she quickly applied and as the saying goes, "The rest is history". Her focus and reason for coming to work every day is to help someone else along the way.

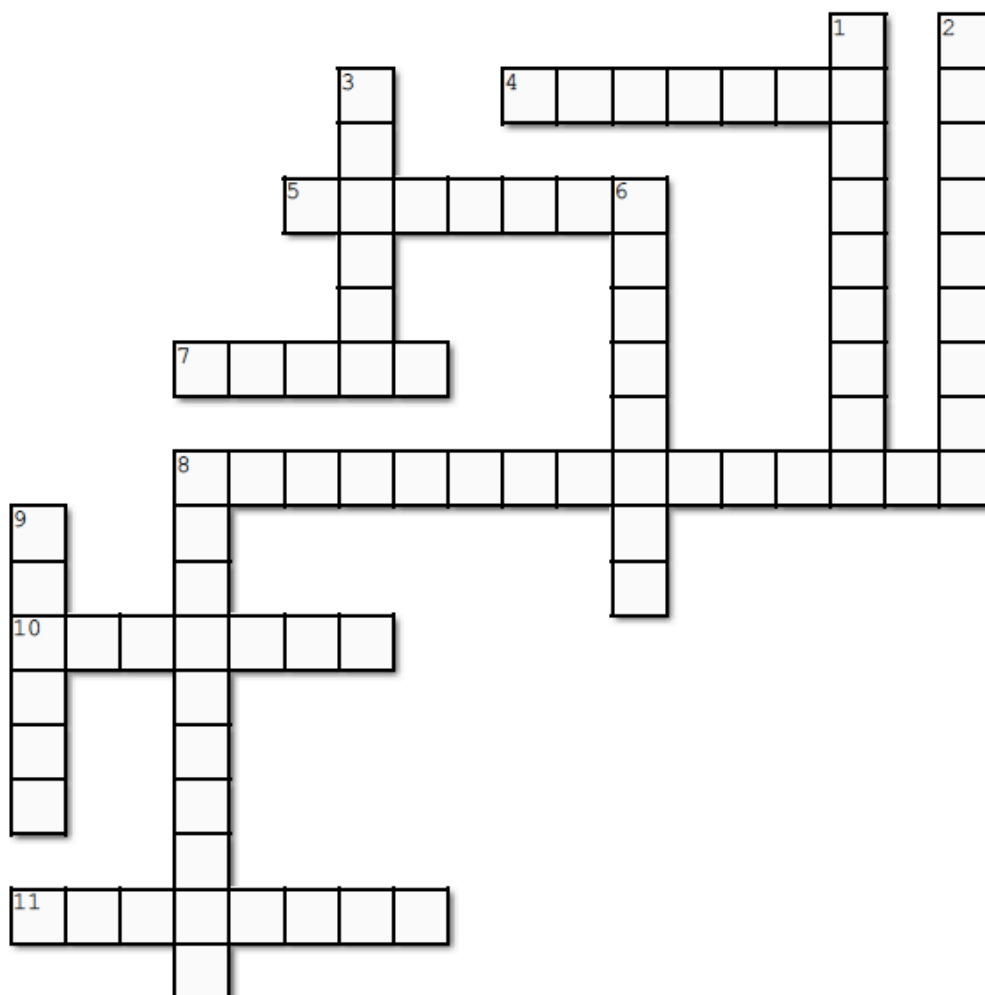
As SHIP Program Director, a significant portion of Linda's time is spent in community outreach at senior centers, assisted living, and libraries. She also spends time working in partnering with Social Security and Medicaid throughout the five county NACOLG region which includes Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale, Marion and Winston counties. A huge portion of her time is spent on the phone assisting patients by explaining their healthcare options, helping them enroll in new plans, disenrolling, and resolving claims. She works closely with the SenioRx program, resolving issues that pop up from time to time. Linda is also responsible for the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) program, empowering and assisting Medicare patients, their families, and caregivers to prevent, detect, and report healthcare fraud.

Linda is SHIP Certified through State of Alabama Department of Senior Services and the Area Agency on Aging. She is certified through CMS (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid), CIRS-A/D AIRS Certified, and a Certified Information & Referral Specialist for Aging. She has a strong accounting background through SMS and Drury College in Springfield, Mo.

## C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy Network Members

- A) Addison Discount Pharmacy | Addison, AL
- B) Kroger Pharmacy | Opelika, AL
- C) Walgreens Pharmacy #6955 | Hueytown, AL
- D) Rainsville Drugs | Rainsville, AL
- E) Walmart Neighborhood Market | East University location, Auburn, AL
- F) Walgreens Pharmacy #4589 | Pelham, AL
- G) Lillian Pharmacy | Lillian, AL
- H) Pharmacy Services of Mobile | Mobile, AL
- I) Weldon Pharmacy | Hueytown, AL
- J) Beauregard Drugs | Auburn, AL
- K) Rite Aid Pharmacy #07054 | Madison, AL
- L) Rite Aid Pharmacy #07013 | Birmingham, AL
- M) Continuity of Care Internal Medicine Clinics- Brookwood Baptist Health | Birmingham, AL
- N) Section Pharmacy | Section, AL
- O) Gadsden City Pharmacy | Gadsden, AL
- P) Fred's Pharmacy #3056 | Tuscumbia, AL
- Q) Walmart Pharmacy #4330 | Chelsea, AL
- R) The Drug Store | Livingston, AL
- S) Beasley Pharmacy | Columbia, AL
- T) York Drug | York, AL
- U) City Drugs | Grove Hill, AL
- V) Walgreens Pharmacy #10525 | Tuscaloosa, AL
- W) Walgreens Pharmacy #9427 | Pelham, AL
- X) Winn-Dixie Pharmacy #0543 | Selma, AL
- Y) Autauga Pharmacy | Autaugaville, AL
- Z) Turenne PharMedCo | Montgomery, AL
- a) Swift Drug Co. | Selma, AL
- b) Borden Family Pharmacy | Cullman, AL
- c) Walgreens #10333 | Birmingham, AL
- d) Adams Drugs | Prattville, AL
- e) Christ Health Center Pharmacy | Birmingham, AL
- f) Walgreens Pharmacy #11651 | Birmingham, AL
- g) Walgreens Pharmacy #9456 | Montgomery, AL



**Across**

4. THE FINANCIAL BURDEN DUE TO MEDICARE FRAUD HAS BEEN ESTIMATED AT \$54 \_\_\_\_\_.
5. NEARLY 460,000 MEDICARE PATIENTS RECEIVED HIGH AMOUNTS OF \_\_\_\_\_ IN 2017.
7. THE LIVE C.A.R.E.S. CE PROGRAM HELD AT APA WILL BE LIMITED TO THE FIRST \_\_\_\_\_ PHARMACISTS.
8. THE THIRD C.A.R.E.S. CE ARTICLE IS AVAILABLE AT \_\_\_\_\_ .ORG .
10. LINDA NEWKIRK BEGAN WORKING FOR NACOLG IN 2003 AS \_\_\_\_\_ COORDINATOR.
11. KELLY TATE IS A WALGREENS HEALTH \_\_\_\_\_ PHARMACIST.

**Down**

1. THE OFFICE OF THE \_\_\_\_\_ GENERAL INVESTIGATES MEDICARE FRAUD.
2. OUR TWO NEWEST PHARMACIES ARE BOTH \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. PHARMACISTS SHOULD \_\_\_\_\_ SUSPECTED MEDICARE FRAUD TO THE OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL.
6. PCS STANDS FOR PERSONAL CARE \_\_\_\_\_.
8. OUR NEWLY AVAILABLE THIRD CE ARTICLE IS TITLE \_\_\_\_\_ PROGRAMS AVAILABLE FOR OLDER ADULTS.
9. WE WILL BE OFFERING A 1.5 HOUR LIVE CE AT APA THIS YEAR IN \_\_\_\_\_, FL.

## FINAL CE ARTICLE IN 3-PART SERIES NOW AVAILABLE!

In partnership with Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS), the Harrison School of Pharmacy has developed a new ACPE approved one credit hour CE article available at no cost to you or your technician. As a network member, we are offering this to you as a refresher course.

This CE Article, entitled *Assistance Programs Available for Older Adults*, provides pharmacists and pharmacy technicians with information surrounding Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) and the variety of services and support programs available through these entities. These programs include the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), SenioRx, Elderly Nutrition Program, Senior Employment, Long Term Care Assistance Program, Caregiver Support, Legal Assistance, Long Term Care Ombudsman, and Senior Medicare Patrol. After learning about these programs and their respective eligibility criteria, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians will be able to request assistance on behalf of their patients and refer them to the local ADRC.

The learning objectives of this CE Article are as follows:

1. Describe the objectives of Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs)
2. Describe ADRCs' programs in terms of their objectives and eligibility requirements
3. Identify the local ADRCs in which a collaboration can be established

If you would like to complete this course and receive credit, simply review the educational material and complete the post-test and evaluation. You can access the CE at <https://alpharmacycares.org/> where it is available as a downloadable pdf. The assessment is included within the CE pdf and upon completion, can be faxed to 334-844-8307, or emailed to Tessa Hastings at [tjh0043@auburn.edu](mailto:tjh0043@auburn.edu). Alternatively, you may complete the assessment online at <https://alpharmacycares.org/>.

For non-network members this course is offered as the final requirement in the 3-part CE series. Pharmacies with at least one full time pharmacist who have completed each of the three CE articles will be eligible to join the C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy Network. Completion of all three CE articles is equivalent to completion of the 3-hour online continuing education program. If additional staff at your pharmacy are interested, please pass this information along.

Articles in this series are available at <https://alpharmacycares.org/> and include:

1. The Basics of Medicare for Pharmacy Personnel
2. Pharmacists' Role in Assisting Medicare Patients with Limited Income
3. Assistance Programs Available for Older Adults

If you are interested or want more information about either CE program, please visit <https://alpharmacycares.org/>

ACROSS:  
4. BILLION  
5. OPIOIDS  
7. FIFTY  
8. ALPHARMACYCARES  
10. SENIORX  
11. OUTCOMES  
DOWN:  
1. INSPECTOR  
2. WALGREENS  
3. REPORT  
6. SERVICES  
8. ASSISTANCE  
9. DESTIN