

## **Senior PharmAssist Participant Evaluation**

*2 September 2008*

*This report is a summary of approximately 75 phone interviews with Senior PharmAssist participants or their caregivers. Of the 75 interviews, approximately nine caregivers were interviewed and eight of the interviews were conducted with couples where both individuals are participants in Senior PharmAssist. All interviewees were notified of their right to confidentiality and participated in the interviews on a voluntary basis. The purpose of the interviews was to elicit information and feedback from participants about their experience working with Senior PharmAssist. This report was prepared by and all interviews were conducted by Daniel Seed, MSW, whom Senior PharmAssist trained and educated solely for this project.*

### **Question 1: How long have you been participating with Senior PharmAssist?**

Answers varied from months to many years. Some participants had just started the program and therefore had a little less to say about their experience. The Sole Source participants are newer to the program and while they are generally enthusiastic about the program they are just still feeling things out. I spoke with some participants who say they have been with the program upwards of 5 years. Many people had difficulty recollecting the exact time. One man stated, "Me and my wife have been working with them for over 2 years. They are just like family."

### **Question 2 & 3: How do you get to the office? Are you satisfied with this mode of transportation?**

Participants come to appointments by driving their personal vehicles, getting a ride from caregivers or family members, being picked up by the Red Cross, and some, on the rare occasion, have used public transportation or walked from their nearby residences. Many participants expressed much gratitude for being able to receive services at home. When participants receiving home visits were asked, How do you get to the office?, they were generally confused and responded, "Well, I don't go anywhere, they come to me!"

Participants who drive to the office varied in their satisfaction levels. Some mentioned they did not understand why they had to come into the office so often and the parking situation at the office was not good. Others were caught off guard by the question and stated simply, "I drive myself there." Participants who said they drive themselves are pleased with their situation. Participants driven by caregivers also stated being pleased but expressed some concern about it being inconvenient for their sons, daughters, or other caregivers. Caregivers mentioned on several occasions that it is not easy juggling all the different appointments that many of their grandparents or parents have to attend. Several caregivers greatly appreciate the Red Cross option

and think it is a nice service because they assume it is not available for many of the routine doctor visits and trips to the pharmacy that happen more frequently. This interviewer suggests that all caregivers be checked in with before each appointment about transportation. It was clear that many caregivers are interested in alternative transportation options, not always but on occasion. Participants themselves were less enthusiastic about the Red Cross option, but generally responded that it worked fine for them. Many participants noted that they felt comforted by having family members not only drive them to their appointments but accompany them during the meetings.

**Question 4: How are you treated by the staff and volunteers at Senior PharmAssist?**

Quotes:

“I couldn’t be treated any better. They act like they have all day when assisting me. They know my name and I’m not just a number. They try to really help. They have really changed my life.”

“The people are lovely there.”

“Wonderfully, always!”

“They treat me wonderful.”

“Excellent. Everyone always has time. They bend over backwards for people.”

“Oh, everybody is really nice there. They are good. They have gone out of their way to help me.”

“I think they are all the nicest people – professional, precise, and kind.”

“It’s a very pleasant atmosphere.”

“You couldn’t ask for a better group of people.”

“They are good to me!”

“I appreciate them so much.”

“I couldn’t get any better treatment than if I were the president.”

Caregiver - “I was treated wonderfully. They made it a pleasant and non-stressful experience. My mom had 28 medications and they sat down with me and explained all the medications and what they were for. I was able to reduce the medications and now I’m saving money and my mother is doing great!”

Caregiver – (Me and my mom are treated) “Like we are queens. They bend over backwards to help. They go above and beyond any other program. If they don’t know the answer, they find someone who does. They have truly been a God send.”

Caregiver – “They drove 25 miles to see my father cause he couldn’t go into the office. They help me by helping him because medicines are so difficult to navigate and understand.”

Other descriptive words used to describe Senior PharmAssist included: cooperative, punctual, helpful, pleasant, polite, no problems what-so-ever, best place I've been, concerned, conscientious, person-centered, respectful, just like family, and patient.

***Question 5: Please tell me the one or two things that the folks at Senior PharmAssist do to help you the most?***

*Quotes:*

“They educate people and they get me to tell them what medicines are for so that I can keep up on my own. They check in on me too, once during an ice storm when my power was out.”

“They always have time to listen. They work with me very well. The pillboxes, calendars, appt. calendars they give us – they all mean something.”

“One time I had a problem with my insurance company. Before I knew it, we were making a three-way call, and everything got straightened out. They are on top of everything.”

“If they see a generic that I could possibly take they help me get it as long as my doctor sees it fit.”

“The discount we get on our medications through their service is helping out quite a bit.”

“When I go into the Medicare gap – they help minimize the financial burden.”

“They're good to me. They get things straight! I'm 68-years old and my children don't help me a bit! My husband don't have no legs! Just put down yes on everything because they good to me!”

“I just feel that they look out for people. I know they have looked out for me.”

“I thank you for all the services that you render. My uncle being on a fixed income cannot afford medications and I certainly can't help having three kids and all. Hopefully, we can get him linked up with a prescription plan.”

“They take care of us; they check in on us daily.”

*Common things participants said Senior PharmAssist does for them:*

1. Ask if I recognize pills I'm taking in order to teach and keep me better informed.
2. Educate and provide explanations on medicines.
3. Save me a lot of money.
4. They take my blood pressure and give other general medical advice.
5. They look at my medicines and get them organized.
6. Help get some medicines for free.
7. Help fill out applications for drug plan(s).
8. Help choose appropriate medications.
9. They help navigate the insurance companies and find insurance companies that help with medicine.

10. Medicare prescription D. “They straighten out Medicare D, it’s all fouled up and they keep me organized.”
11. Home visits are available if I can’t go into office.
12. Will call doctor and drug store/pharmacy if need be.
13. Great with follow-up.
14. Find out which programs people are eligible for.
15. Work with older adults patiently.
16. Senior PharmAssist is honest. “When the Medicare D thing came on board everybody was confused. I really appreciate Senior PharmAssist for being honest along the way and finding out answers.”

**Question 6: If you could change one or two things about Senior PharmAssist, what would you change?**

The overwhelming majority of participants reported they could think of nothing to change about Senior PharmAssist. One woman, when asked this question, stated bluntly, “No, No, No! Don’t change a thing!” Others went on to give even more praise.

Quotes:

“Change nothing, I don’t think they could do no better.”

“I would change absolutely nothing about this program. They are a Godsend. Perhaps I would change one thing, I would give them more government help and more money for the employees. They go 200% beyond. They follow through and they are conscientious.”

Overall, feedback or suggestions about changes were very scarce. There were some general comments and slight frustrations with having to come into the office, waiting to be seen, and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the appointment each take too long. A few persons said they forgot to bring their medicines with them and had to come back for the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the interview. This interviewer elicited constructive feedback from people and some of the feedback received included:

Quotes:

“It would be nice to be able to do some things at home instead of coming into the office.”

“The annual or 6-month reviews can be a bit of a nuisance if nothing has changed much. Although, I understand why they do this.”

“They are often pushing generic medicines when I know I can’t take those. It would be nice if they could help more with some of the name brand medicines. I don’t think I’m the only one where generics just don’t work.”

“I appreciate the program, but some medications are not covered. For example, my heart pills are the most important and the most expensive. The most expensive are not covered.”

Also, some participants mentioned that their cards did not work too well up at Lincoln Clinic. They seemed to think the card did not help change prices. On a side note, some

participants gave extra information related to but not specific to Senior PharmAssist's services about the frustrations they experience navigating medicine, insurance, and the ensuing expenses. Frustrations included the inability to take generics and therefore the costliness of brand name drugs, the Medicare gap, and the variation in cost for medicine from refill to refill.

**Questions 7 & 8: Do you find the first part of the interview helpful (talking with Casey or Dyana)? Do you find the time with the pharmacist helpful (Marilyn, Jessica, Lisa, or Gina)?**

In general, nothing but good things were said about the individual employees at Senior PharmAssist. One caretaker went so far as to say, "They all should be cloned." The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> parts of the interview are helpful to participants in many ways. Participants appreciate the clear, thorough, and simply termed explanations about medicines. Participants feel Senior PharmAssist gives more information than normal places, including some doctor's offices. In addition, Senior PharmAssist takes their time to make sure you know information and have it to take home in written form. Caregivers mentioned on several occasions that they enjoyed learning about the 14-year history of the program and wished they had known about the program earlier. Participants feel Senior PharmAssist works hard to get people coverage for their medicines. In addition, participants appreciate that Senior PharmAssist employees make them think about things and challenge them to know about their own medicines. Participants feel they receive great advice and that it comes from smart people. Participants appreciate all the little things Senior PharmAssist offers including the pill-boxes, salves, creams, calendars, and medication logs.

Quotes:

"What they do is really amazing. After Medicaid let me go they helped me get the medicines I need."

"Casey waits on me hand and foot."

"They re-explain things for me each time and teach me something different each time."

"Conscientious, concerned, polite, and most important respectful to my mother."

"They explained what medicines could mix with what and medicine combinations. They explained generics."

"They help me feel reassured and help me make a plan for taking my medications because I have to take them at three different times per day."

"They challenge me and now I really do know about my medications."

"Meeting with the pharmacist was helpful. They went over medications and my uncle had a better understanding afterwards because he was having difficulty identifying his medications."

“I’ve taken the same drugs for so long that you forget what they are for. So, they helped me straighten that out.”

“I’ve worked with them for a while now, so I trust them and take their advice very seriously.”

“They go through my medicines and get things straight for me. They coach me on how to talk with my doctor.”

***Question 9: Do you find the medication record that they give you helpful?***

The majority of participants interviewed reported really liking the medication record. Participants explained that the medication record helps to keep track of medications, what they are for, how much they cost, and which ones are covered or not covered. Many explained that they give a copy to their doctor and pharmacist and it keeps everyone on the same page. Many report that doctors and pharmacists really appreciate the tool. Participants like the fact that they can leave their medications at home because the record has everything on it. Others like the clear-cut layout rather than the hard to read printouts most pharmacies give.

Some people say they never use the medication record because they have been on the same medications for a long time and feel they know their medicines without the written record. Several participants said they did not know what the medication record is and others stated it was hard to navigate due to poor vision.

***Quotes:***

“Yes, very helpful. When I go to primary doctor I don’t have to carry medication bottles. They can look at my list and know exactly what, when, and how much I’m taking. The doctors really like it. It’s a neat tool.”

“I take it to the doctor’s office with me. The doctors love it. It makes appointments better because I know some stuff and the doctors know I’m interested.”

“Yes. It marks what is paid for and not paid for - keeps us and the pharmacy on the same page.”

“I am taking 9 different medicines. So, I take it with me everywhere.”

“It saves me at the doctor’s office.”

“Heck yeah it’s helpful. I’m forgetful, I’m 84.”

***Question 10: Would you refer a friend or family member to Senior PharmAssist?***

Most participants said that they have told people about Senior PharmAssist. Several persons explained that they take flyers with them to the pharmacy or their apartment buildings. Participants generally say that Senior PharmAssist is a program that helps people with their medicines and getting them at a cheaper cost.

Quotes:

“I tell people all the time. I say it is a service helpful at getting medicines at a reduced cost. You can’t ask for much more than that.”

“I carry flyers down to the pharmacy with me. I do my little things to help out.”

“Most definitely, I’m just so grateful to be getting my medicines cheaper. I tell people that they will help you. I think that they relieve stress on me and my family, if I didn’t have them my family members would have to pick up the financial burden of my medicines.”

“My friend is also in the program and we talk all the time about how we wouldn’t know what to do without their help.”

“I’m glad to help out in anyway that I can because they do so much for me and my husband.”