



Long Term Care Medical Education in the US: Training Medical Students, Resident Physicians, and Practicing Physicians.

American Medical Directors Association (AMDA) Long Term Care Medicine Professional Development Continuum

Daniel Swagerty, MD, MPH, CMD
Professor of Family Medicine and Internal Medicine
Director of Geriatric Medicine and Palliative Care
University of Kansas School of Medicine
Kansas City, Kansas USA

Background

While the breadth and depth of geriatric medical education in the United States has expanded greatly over the last 25 years, the specific training of medical professionals in long term care medicine has not undergone as much growth or uniformity. Most medical students and primary care resident physicians receive some exposure to long term care medicine, but this aspect of geriatric medical education is still variable across schools of medicine and postgraduate primary care residency programs. The most impactful long term care medical education training has occurred through continuing education courses of practicing physicians. In particular, the American Medical Directors Association (AMDA) has taken the lead in training these already experienced medical professionals in the identified knowledge and skills to be an effective long term care physician.

AMDA is a national professional association of medical directors, attending physicians, and other professionals practicing long term care medicine (LTC) committed to the continuous improvement of patient care. Currently, all long-term care facilities are required to have a physician identified as a medical director. Many medical directors serve in a variety of settings across the long term care continuum; including, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living, hospice care, subacute/post-acute care, home care, long term care hospitals/long term acute care hospitals, and continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs).

AMDA and its affiliates – the AMDA Foundation (AMDA-F) and AMDA Certification Program (AMDCP) - conduct several ongoing programs which provides a professional development continuum in long term care medicine as shown in Table 1 and discussed in the following section.

American Medical Directors Association (AMDA) Long Term Care Medicine Professional Development Continuum

Futures Program

The AMDA Foundation Futures Program was created to address the critical shortage of American physicians serving frail elders in long term care settings by increasing the number of primary care residents and fellows interested in long term care practice as medical directors, attending physicians, and long term care researchers. The Futures Program is the Foundation’s central focus in its mission to educate and inspire current and future long term care professionals.

According to the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) 2008 report, *Retooling for an Aging America*, the number of American older adults will *nearly double* between the years 2005 and 2030. One of the report's key findings is that as the population of older adults grows to approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population, the health care system will be inadequate to meet societal needs. The numbers in the workforce will be too small and they will not be prepared to meet the needs of an aging population.

The IOM analyzed data from the Association of Directors of Geriatric Academic Programs (ADGAP) and the Alliance for Aging Research and found "there is currently a shortage of approximately 12,000 geriatricians; by 2030 the shortage will be about 28,000. By 2025, there is projected to be an overall shortage of 100,000 physicians." Underscoring the seriousness of the problem, the IOM report noted that "as of January 2007, 23.3 percent of all active physicians were 60 or older, and by 2020 almost half of all registered nurses are expected to be over age 50."

The Futures Program is one way to address the imperatives in the IOM report. Indeed, many past participants become medical directors of long term care facilities and set the protocols and care processes within the facilities. Several past participants are now leaders in the research arena and others serve as leaders within AMDA and the AMDA Foundation. Since its inception in 2000, the program has become a highly sought after experience that is very desirable for any primary care resident physician or geriatric medicine fellow considering working in long term care. Almost 500 primary care residents and geriatric fellows have participated in the Futures Program.

The Futures Program identifies those primary care resident physicians and geriatric medicine fellows who are interested in long term care and provides them with an intensive training program to help them assess career opportunities in long term care medicine. Attendees have the opportunity to hear from long term care physicians on a variety of topics pertinent to a long term care as a career path. Sessions span a general overview of long term care practice, practical approaches to LTC management, quality improvement and clinical practice guidelines, as well as risk management.

The Futures Program is held immediately prior to AMDA's annual symposium. Attendees have the opportunity to participate in symposia workshops, receiving invaluable educational opportunities in the area of long term care practice. As the only national program that provides information and guidance on how to pursue a career in long term care, the Futures Program also provides participants with invaluable networking opportunities.

Most recently, the Foundation introduced a new and successful mentoring component to the Futures Program. Futures participants are now partnered with an active and involved AMDA member who mentors the participant, sharing experiences and wisdom. Mentees learn the value of becoming a Certified Medical Director, what it is like to practice in various LTC settings, understanding roles and responsibilities of medical directors, guidance in career planning, and other professional and personal development mentoring.

Futures participants are chosen from a competitive selection process and they receive admission to the Futures Program, registration to AMDA's Long Term Care Medicine annual symposium, AMDA membership for one year, and a monthly subscription to the *Journal of the American Medical Directors Association (JAMDA)*. The AMDA Mentoring Program also matches Futures participants with medical directors working in the region where they are pursuing their postgraduate training or they intend to work after completion of their training. Program participants consistently indicate that the Futures Program meets an important need for them that they do not receive in their individual residency and fellowship training programs, including, mentoring by LTC medicine leaders, professional networking and the encouragement of intellectual independence.

AMDA Core Curriculum on Medical Direction in Long Term Care

This week-long continuing education course is tailored to the needs of practicing physicians who practice in any long term care setting or combination of settings across the long term care continuum; including, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living, continuing care retirement communities, hospice, and home care. Geriatric fellows in training who are considering the inclusion of LTC medical direction in their future medical practices find this course to be a beneficial introduction to management requirements for long term care. The goal is to create a stronger sense of the leadership role of the long term care medical director and to provide opportunities to develop skills and interact with peers. The objectives of the course are listed in Table 2.

Certified Medical Director in Long Term Care (AMDA CMD) Program

The American Medical Directors Certification Program (AMDCP), an independent affiliate of AMDA, recognizes and advances physician leadership and excellence in medical direction throughout the long term care continuum through certification, thereby enhancing quality of care. The certification program was developed over several years of through research, surveys, and several consensus conferences to identify essential skills and knowledge to serve as an effective long term care medical director.

Since 1996, the program has been administered by the American Medical Directors Certification Program (AMDCP). Since the program's inception, more than 2,500 physician medical directors have received the AMDA CMD designation. The Certified Medical Director (CMD) in long term care recognizes the dual clinical and managerial roles of the medical director. The CMD credential reinforces the leadership role of the medical director in providing quality care and provides an indicator of a long term care medical director's professional competence to long term care providers, government, quality assurance agencies, consumers, and the general public.

The certification process is based on completing geriatric medical clinical training and management education, as well as long term care practice experience. Both AMDA members and non-member physicians who currently serve as medical directors or associate medical director, in one or more long term care facility/setting are eligible to apply if they meet each of the criteria listed in Table 3.

Value of CMD Certification

A 2009 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Directors Association (JAMDA)* found that having an AMDA Certified Medical Director (CMD) contributes positively to a nursing home's quality of care. Analysis of data showed that quality of care scores represented a 15% improvement for facilities with Certified Medical Directors (CMDs). The data also addresses how other factors – including facility size, not-for-profit status, and higher registered nurse (RN) hours per patient day – relate to the presence of a CMD to impact the quality of care in nursing homes (Rowland 2009).

The data from this study may have policy implications in all of long-term care. Because the certified medical director designation indicates a minimum level of experience and education in medical director management and clinical geriatric medicine, it suggests that every long-term facility and program should have a certified medical director or the equivalent.

Summary

The experience of training of medical professionals in long term care medicine in the United States has shown that there is a urgent need to focus attention and resources across the professional development continuum to provide for the present population of older adults in long term care settings, as well as prepare for the anticipated significant growth in this area of medical practice. All medical students, primary care resident physicians, and geriatric medicine fellows must receive specific long term care medical training to meet the challenges of caring for an increasing vulnerable population of older adults. Dissemination of impactful medical education and training for all practicing physicians in the long term care continuum is also a pressing health care need.

The two greatest current challenges for long term care medical education will be developing meaningful competencies for practicing in the long term care continuum and identifying the resources necessary to make these competency-based criteria a reality. Addressing these important issues by an international panel of long term care experts will be an exciting opportunity to advance the agenda of global quality long term medical care.

References

1. IOM. *Retooling for an Aging America Building the Health Care Workforce*. Committee on the Future Health Care Workforce for Older Americans Board on Health Care Services. Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, The National Academies Press, Washington, D.C., 2008.
2. Rowland F, Cowles M, Dickstein C, Katz P. Impact of medical director certification on nursing home quality of care. *J Am Med Dir Assoc*. 2009; 10: 431-435.

Table 1

AMDA Long Term Care Medicine Professional Development Continuum

- The AMDA Foundation's **Futures Program** was developed to bring new physicians into the field by providing an intensive learning experience for medical residents and fellows in internal medicine, geriatrics, and family medicine, highlighting rewarding career opportunities available in long term care.
- The AMDA **Core Curriculum on Medical Direction** (Core Curriculum) guides physicians through 20 critical areas of long term care management. Each topic builds on information shared and interactive exercises to create a comprehensive and cohesive picture of medical direction in long term care.
- The **Certified Medical Director in Long Term Care Program** was created to professionalize the field of medical direction. The Certified Medical Director (CMD) program recognizes the dual clinical and managerial roles of the medical director. Certification requires indicators of competence in clinical medicine and medical management in long term care.

Table 2

AMDA Core Curriculum on Medical Direction in Long Term Care Course Objectives

- Develop practical skills needed to fulfill the role and responsibilities of the medical director.
- Identify the unique aspects of the long term care environment that impact the medical director's job.
- Describe the organizational responsibilities and dynamics of the medical director and the interdisciplinary team.
- Develop communication skills to deal with responsibilities for the interdisciplinary team, residents, and their families.
- Explain the resident care responsibilities of the medical director, including emergency care, quality management, family systems, and ethical considerations.
- Enhance leadership skills and team building towards a stronger role for the medical director with the interdisciplinary team.
- Develop human resource skills to deal with difficult situations and improve personal effectiveness in this area.

Table 3

Certified Medical Director in Long Term Care (AMDA CMD) Program Certification Steps

Primary Clinical Qualifications:

- *Basic Postgraduate Education and LTC Clinical Experience:* Completion of a U.S. Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education or American Osteopathic Association accredited post-graduate training program in any specialty, or a Canadian Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons or College of Family Physicians accredited post-graduate training program **and** complete two years of clinical practice in long term care
- *Current Licensure:* Hold a current, unrestricted, state license as an M.D. or D.O. in the U.S. or an equivalent license to practice medicine in Canada
OR
- *Advanced Postgraduate Education in Geriatrics and LTC Clinical Experiences:* Completion of a geriatric medicine fellowship or hold a Certificate of Added Qualifications in Geriatrics. This track does not require a separate completion on clinical experience in long term care, as this training is provided as part of a geriatric medicine fellowship or Certificate of Added Qualifications in Geriatrics
- *Current Licensure:* Hold a current, unrestricted, state license as an M.D. or D.O. in the U.S. or an equivalent license to practice medicine in Canada

Specific LTC Medical Direction Qualifications:

- *Medical Direction Experience:* Spend a minimum of 8 hours each month in service as a medical director in a long term care setting.
- *Medical Direction Education:* Complete the one week live course - AMDA Core Curriculum on Medical Direction

Recertification: Required every six years.