



# OANHSS

**ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF NON-PROFIT HOMES AND SERVICES FOR SENIORS**

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April 15, 2014

The Toronto Star  
One Yonge Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
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Letter to the Editor:

**Re: Toronto Star Investigation: "They Tried to Quiet Her Down" (April 15, 2014)**

The care of residents with dementia is both a complex and complicated issue. Each resident has individual needs and personalized care requirements, and homes strive to meet these needs and provide the highest quality care.

The unfortunate reality is that aggressive and unpredictable behaviours can often accompany dementia and homes must ensure the safety of all residents. Non-pharmacological approaches are tried first, and some homes have seen real progress in reducing the use of medications through the implementation of Montessori techniques and other behaviour management models.

There are circumstances, however, where medication is required. What this article fails to point out is that medication use in long term care homes is highly regulated by the provincial government and strict controls are in place based on best practices and safety. Physicians assess, determine and prescribe medications and are obligated to seek the consent of the resident or substitute decision maker to explain the benefits and risks of any medication prior to use. Medications are reassessed at minimum quarterly by the prescribing physician in consultation with other members of the care team, which often includes a consulting pharmacist and registered nurses. All such details must be recorded in the resident's care plan and any changes to this plan must be done in consultation with the resident or substitute decision maker.

Dementia affects, on average, six out of every 10 residents in Ontario's long term care homes and this is increasing at a rate of almost 3% per year. We need a province-wide, systemic approach to caring for this vulnerable population. We have a collective responsibility to ensure their safety and we need to put our focus on long term, sustainable solutions.

Sincerely,

Donna A. Rubin  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors