



# KEEPING TABS

## Absolute Pharmacy is the prescription for what ails you.

In each quarterly edition, you'll find the latest news about pharmacy, new medications, technology and more – all through the lens of what is pertinent to the long-term care (LTC) industry.

Absolute Pharmacy has been serving the LTC industry since 1994. We're a part of a dynamic circle of care that consists of rehabilitation, home health care services, hospice care and much more. We have a rich perspective, and we're thrilled to share what we've been learning from industry leaders, our employees and our customers – you!

We are confident you'll find the information useful. If you have a suggestion for a topic you'd like to learn about, let us know at [maryjo.mcelyea@abshealth.com](mailto:maryjo.mcelyea@abshealth.com).

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## State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy Audit at Nursing Facilities

### Be prepared for a new inspection process

Toward the end of 2017, one of our consultant pharmacists was at a facility for a Quality Assurance & Performance Improvement (QAPI) meeting when a state board inspector arrived for a “routine audit.” The inspector spoke with the Director of Nursing (DON) and the DON explained facility processes involving ordering, receiving and storing medications. The inspector, DON and our consultant pharmacist proceeded to the conference room to fill out paperwork. In addition to typing up the report, the inspector also asked many questions about checking-in controls, the DON’s role in overseeing security and our audit processes. The whole visit took just over three hours. The inspector had been visiting nursing homes in the Cleveland area and was new to long-term care processes. This particular audit had no discrepancies or concerns found.

Contact the pharmacy or your consultant pharmacist if we can be of assistance.

AREA COVERED	
Initial inspection information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Licensing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Security	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Minimum standards/cleanliness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Refrigeration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Supervision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Health record system	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Demographics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nursing facility includes:	
Number of nursing units	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Number of emergency drug boxes/kits	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Drug delivery	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Medication rooms and contingency stock	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Medication orders and drug administration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Medication carts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Drug return/destruction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Inspection affirmation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



## Do Probiotics Really Work?

By John 'Ben' McCoury, The University of Findlay College of Pharmacy, Pharm D. Candidate 2018

Probiotics are defined by the World Health Organization in the most basic sense as “live micro-organisms which, when administered in adequate amounts, confer a health benefit on the host.”<sup>1</sup> Probiotics have become a popular area of interest for many health care providers and consumers alike. Although benefits of these products have been demonstrated, it is hard to know if or when their utilization will benefit a particular patient. With the increasing literature and ever growing product selection, the use of probiotics has become a controversial topic, especially in the elderly population. Many things are unclear regarding the efficacy of this highly marketed product and the following questions arise:

- Which strains are beneficial and for which indications?
- How many bacteria need to be contained in a treatment to deem it efficacious?
- Are refrigerated probiotics better than those on the shelf?
- How do we extrapolate the limited study data to our patient populations?

Some of these questions do not have good answers, but with some research, data can be found to support their use in the elderly population. The goal of this article is to shed light on the potential benefits of probiotic use, and what to look for in an “ideal” product.

### Natural Microbiota

The intestines are colonized by around 100 trillion microbes composed of different species of bacteria and viruses.<sup>3</sup> The colonization occurs in the first years of life, and these beneficial microbes help with the function of the immune system, prevent harmful bacteria from growing, help the body process water and nutrients from food more efficiently, and provide nutrients to the body.<sup>4</sup>

The disruption of this microbiota is the root of several gastrointestinal health complications such as antibiotic associated diarrhea, inflammatory bowel disease, irritable bowel syndrome, C-diff infections and even cancer.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, elderly individuals have been shown to have





## Do Probiotics Really Work? *Continued*

a less diverse microbiota. With age, gastric acid production decreases changing the living conditions for the microbes. In addition, metabolism slows down causing products to move through the GI tract more slowly.

Other factors, not necessarily due to aging alone, that may contribute to microbial variations include changes in living conditions, nutrition, medications, and even a universal decline in health.<sup>7</sup> We do know that a diverse microbiota is needed to maintain good health, so it makes sense that strengthening the good bacteria in the body would help prevent and improve certain health conditions associated with a disrupted microbiota.

### How do Probiotics Work?

Although the exact mechanism is not always well understood, we do know that probiotics colonize the host thereby altering the host microflora to exhibit growth of the “healthy” bacterial species. This colonization mimics the natural microbiome and exerts advantageous health effects in the host in the same ways. These beneficial bacteria have been shown to produce chemicals that inhibit

pathogen growth, attachment and microbial toxin release. In other words, the growth of the good bacteria is enhanced and thus outcompetes harmful organisms.

### Indications

Probiotics have been used for a wide array of disorders, and clinical evidence supports their use in bacterial vaginosis, diarrhea associated with acute infections and antibiotic use, GI surgery, irritable bowel syndrome, upper respiratory tract infections, blood pressure, ventilator-associated pneumonia, and possibly the prevention of eczema, diabetes and dyslipidemia.<sup>13</sup>

The most common clinical use is the prevention of antibiotic-associated diarrhea (AAD), which occurs more often in the elderly population. AAD can result in complications such as dehydration, electrolyte imbalances and overall discomfort. Studies have shown that probiotics can prevent/treat AAD when administered with and for a period after antibiotic use. For example, a specific study showed that certain probiotics reduced the risk of AAD by 42 percent.<sup>13</sup> Another review found that the risk of developing *C. difficile*-associated diarrhea (CDAD) was reduced by 64 percent in patients given probiotics in conjunction with antibiotics.

### Which Probiotics are Beneficial?

Many products are available, so what’s the difference? Why should one product be chosen over another? The ultimate dissimilarity is that different products contain altered strains of beneficial bacteria at different concentrations. Some specific bacteria that have shown benefits in patients include certain members of the *Bifidobacterium*, *Lactobacillus*, *Saccharomyces*, and even *Streptococcus* genera.<sup>13</sup> Probiotic users should therefore look for products that contain these particular bacteria, and even conduct some research of their own to evaluate the product for their specific condition.

### What is the Optimum “Dose” to Use?

Another uncertainty arises when considering the correct dose of probiotic that may convey benefit. “Strength” is reported in colony-forming units (CFUs) with many products containing several billion CFUs per dose. Unfortunately, no general dose has been established, so information must be extrapolated from studies evaluating the specific strain of bacteria; a higher number of CFUs may not necessarily be more beneficial.



## Viability

The viability of products should be assessed, especially since probiotics are living organisms. It is therefore important that manufacturers list their CFUs through the expiration date and not simply at the time of production to ensure the patient is receiving the appropriate strength.<sup>12</sup> The viability of these products can be effected by storage. For example, some probiotics require refrigeration while others sit on the shelf. Does that make one better than the other? Refrigeration does slow down microbial death, however, probiotics that do not require refrigeration are manufactured in a way to limit microbial death such as by limiting microbial exposure to moisture, light and oxygen. No head-to-head studies have been conducted to test which storage method is more effective, so the most important concept now is to store the products according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

Although the evidence may not be stated forthright in a set of practice guidelines, studies and reviews have shown benefit in using probiotics for certain health conditions. Probiotic use is considered safe although abdominal cramping, nausea, fever, soft stools, flatulence and taste disturbances have been reported; some rare cases have linked probiotics to serious infections.<sup>12</sup> Along with a favorable safety profile, the low cost supports using these products in certain patients in which even a small proposed benefit exists. Independent research is required by health care providers in which they take into account patient specific characteristics to evaluate the appropriateness of probiotics and the specific strain(s) if they are in fact indicated.

### References:

- <sup>1</sup> FAO/WHO. Guidelines for the evaluation of probiotics in food. FAO/WHO Working Group Report. 2002:1-11. Available from: [http://www.who.int/foodsafety/fs\\_management/en/probiotic\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.who.int/foodsafety/fs_management/en/probiotic_guidelines.pdf). Accessed October 10, 2017.
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- <sup>12</sup> McHenry Martin C, Bryan G. Demystifying Probiotics: Use in the elderly. *Consult Pharm.* 2017;32(8):434-40.
- <sup>13</sup> Lexicomp [Internet]. Hudson (OH): Wolters Kluwer. 2015. Natural Products Database: Probiotics; [cited 2017 Oct 10]. Available from <http://metis.findlay.edu:2306/lco/action/interact>

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## ITEMS THAT MAY NOT BE RETURNED TO ABSOLUTE PHARMACY

The items below may not be returned to Absolute Pharmacy for credit. If dispensed by Absolute Pharmacy, they may be returned to Absolute Pharmacy for destruction with the exception of narcotics. Narcotics must be held at the facility and destroyed by two licensed professionals (nurse and nurse or nurse and pharmacist).

- Refrigerated items
- Narcotics
- Special order items
- Topicals that have been opened
- Liquids that have been opened
- Mixed IV medications
- PASS packs
- Partial punch cards for third-party payers (insurance)
- Anything filled more than 60 days ago

## Put a Face to a Name: Casey Persinger

**Q:** How long have you worked for Absolute Pharmacy?

**A:** 11 years

**Q:** What do you do for Absolute Pharmacy?

**A:** Assistant Director of Operations – managing the work within the pharmacy and maintaining relationships with customers.

**Q:** What do you absolutely love about working for Absolute Pharmacy?

**A:** The people – we have a mix of personalities and talents that work well together.

**Q:** What's your favorite quote or saying?

**A:** Be silly. Be honest. Be kind. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Q:** What chore do you absolutely hate doing?

**A:** Yardwork – luckily my husband doesn't mind it!



**Q:** What do you enjoy doing the most?

**A:** Traveling – I enjoy visiting and experiencing new places.

**Q:** If you could take a vacation anywhere in the world, where would it be?

**A:** New Zealand looks amazing – beautiful scenery, outdoor adventures, food and wine to enjoy.

## Give Us 5 Minutes



### Please Take Our Short Survey

How are we doing? We value your input and feedback and are always looking for ways we can improve. Please take this brief survey and we will use the information to continue providing the services you like and identify areas for improvement. We want to hear from you!

[www.abshealth.com/abpsurvey](http://www.abshealth.com/abpsurvey)

— *You're Invited!* —

# CUSTOMER APPRECIATION EVENT

Absolute Campus • 11:30 a.m.



To express our appreciation for your business, we formally invite you to attend the Absolute Customer Appreciation Event. Please join us on Wednesday, March 21 for complimentary lunch and presentations on hot topics related to our profession. This program has been approved to offer 3 Continuing Education hours for Nursing Home Administrators by the Board of Executives of Long-Term Services and Supports.

Please RSVP to Cindy Gensamer | [cgensamer@abstherapy.com](mailto:cgensamer@abstherapy.com)  
or Mary Jo McElyea | [maryjo.mcelyea@abshealth.com](mailto:maryjo.mcelyea@abshealth.com).

## HOT TOPICS FOR TODAY'S ADMINISTRATORS

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>11:30-12:30</b> | Complimentary Buffet-style Luncheon   |
| <b>12:30-1:00</b>  | Federal Updates<br><i>Mark Parkinson, President/CEO AHCA</i>  |
| <b>1:00-2:00</b>   | The Census Scene in 2018: Strategies to Optimize Occupancy During Change<br><i>Linda Saunders, censusolutions</i> |
| <b>2:00-3:00</b>   | Updates on the New Requirements of Participation<br><i>Michele Conroy, Partner, Rolf Law Firm</i>                 |
| <b>3:00-3:30</b>   | RCS-1 Medicare's Proposed New Payment Model<br><i>Cindy Gensamer, Vice President, Absolute Rehabilitation</i>     |
| <b>3:30-3:45</b>   | Customer-Specific Data  |

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399 E. Maple Street, Suite 100, North Canton, Ohio 44720





# ABSOLUTE INSIGHTS



**WE'RE  
HIRING**

## Join Absolute Health Services

### OPPORTUNITIES:

- Medical Claims Billing
- Pharmacy Data Entry
- Pharmacy Technician
- Customer Support

### Who is Absolute Health Services?

In the 1990s The Schroer Group, a privately-held independent company, started Absolute Pharmacy to provide pharmacy services to related party nursing facilities managed by Altercare Integrated Health Services. Since then, Absolute Pharmacy has grown to service nearly 100 facilities throughout the state of Ohio to become the largest independent pharmacy in Ohio. In addition to the pharmacy, Absolute Health Services also includes Absolute Rehabilitation, Absolute Hospice & Home Health, and Absolute Billing Services. We employ hundreds of people in the post-acute medical field.

### Why work at Absolute Health Services?

- NorthCoast 99 award winner
- Recognized 14 years in a row as one of the best places to work in Northeast Ohio

### Benefits

We offer a generous benefits package including: Health Plan Options, Dental, Vision, 401 (k), PTO, Life Insurance, Disability, LOA

### People

We care – about our patients, customers and our employees.

### Headquarters

339 E. Maple Street, Suite 100, North Canton, Ohio 44720  
[www.abshealth.com](http://www.abshealth.com)

### Contact

**Megan Jones** ([mmjones@abshealth.com](mailto:mmjones@abshealth.com))  
**330.498.8123**

### About The Schroer Group

Now celebrating its 45th anniversary, The Schroer Group is the parent of four family-owned, outcome-based companies, including Altercare Integrated Health Services, Absolute Health Services, Avalon Foodservice and Leverage Purchasing Group. The company is committed to delivering quality care to its patients and residents through skilled nursing, assisted living, outpatient rehabilitation, pharmacy, food distribution and group purchasing.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### CLIENT APPRECIATION EVENT

March 21  
North Canton, OH

### OHCA Annual Convention

May 1-3  
Columbus, OH – *See us at Booth 523.*

### OALA SPRING CONFERENCE

May 14  
Columbus, OH



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