

“Awakenings”— Transforming Alzheimer's Care Treatment

At Ecumen, we envision a world where aging is viewed and understood in radically different ways. Our promise is to innovate, empower, and honor. Therefore, fifteen of Ecumen’s skilled nursing facilities will implement a project aimed at improving the quality of care and life for residents, specifically those who are taking mood altering medications that may be contributing to a lower quality of life.



We are changing the culture in skilled nursing facilities by decreasing the use of mood altering and other potentially unnecessary medications. We will implement systematic changes that will weave empowerment and honor into the daily routines for staff, residents, and other customers.

How it Began

In 2009, Ecumen’s Sunrise Villages in Two Harbors, MN started this initiative. They wanted to replace drugs with aromatherapy, massage, games, exercise, personal attention, better pain control and other techniques. The staff was trained and encouraged to interact with residents with dementia. They were so successful that Ecumen knew they had to incorporate this care into other communities.

The Ecumen Foundation applied for a grant with Dept. of Human Services and was awarded \$ 3.7 M (2010) toward this initiative.

Project Goal 1

Improve the quality of life of nursing facility residents through an integrated approach:

- Decrease the use of mood altering, hypnotics, anti-anxiety, and other unnecessary medications among residents without a supporting diagnosis
- Identify causes of behavioral issues leading to prescription of medications and address behaviors through comprehensive plan using non-pharmaceutical methods
- Utilize strategies to improve physical and cognitive functioning through meaningful activities

Project Goal 2

Improve quality of care for residents by changing the facilities’ cultures to ones that:

- Engage all staff – not just nursing staff – in supporting quality care of residents and their care plans
- Strengthen staff’s relationships with residents through training, trust-building, and engagement in meaningful activities
- Collaborate with physicians, geriatric psychiatrists, pharmacists, and other experts in providing care



Did You Know?

- In 2005, Medicaid spent \$5.4 billion on atypical antipsychotic medicines, which is more than it spent on any other class of drugs, including antibiotics, AIDS drugs or medicines to treat high blood pressure.
- According to a study published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, more than half are prescribed inappropriately to control dementia-related behaviors even though there is no mental illness diagnosis.
- According to a study published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, more than half are prescribed inappropriately to control dementia-related behaviors even though there is no mental illness diagnosis.
- The U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid reports that about 30% of nursing home residents receive antipsychotic drugs, and approximately 20% do not have a psychosis diagnosis