



NEWS SPORTS OPINION ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS COLUMNISTS GAMES & COMICS ARCHIVES

OPINION Editorial Cartoons [Letters to the Editor](#)

[print story](#)

## Ann Albert: Medication management vital for senior citizens

Ann Albert — 2/15/2009 7:47 am

Dear Editor:

Many thanks to Barbara Quirk for her recent column regarding [the National Council on Aging and its critical "impact areas" aimed at helping seniors stay healthy](#), engaged and financially secure. The "impact areas" include: healthy aging; enhancing the capacity to live in communities with dignity, choice and financial security; increasing participation in meaningful and rewarding work; expanding service opportunities that address community needs; and increasing access to public and private benefits and resources. These are right on target, but one area requires special emphasis: medication management.

While medications are important and necessary, it's a fact that many seniors are at risk for being overmedicated. Too often complaints such as memory lapse, fatigue or abdominal pain are thought to be symptoms or part of a disease when in fact they are side effects caused by unfavorable drug interactions.

In December, Prevention Magazine reported that at least 1.5 million adverse drug events occur in the United States every year, thousands of them fatal. Many of these are preventable. In addition, taking several medications sometimes results in neglecting important lifestyle factors that could significantly impact one's health. Considering non-drug interventions, in consultation with one's physician, is an important way for one to take personal responsibility for improved health and independence.

At SAIL (Supporting Active Independent Lives), we regularly encourage seniors to consult with our senior care pharmacist, Alan Lukazewski, if they are taking more than four prescriptions and to have their medications reviewed regularly. This can help prevent a serious adverse event or help eliminate unnecessary medications that can cause nagging side effects or just plain slow a person down. We believe a senior care pharmacist is an important member of the health care team. We also offer access to supportive services, wellness programs, fitness classes, social events, and other opportunities that support healthy aging.

**Ann Albert**

*program director for SAIL - Supporting Active Independent Lives*

*Madison*

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