

# SENIORS FIRST



## The Changing Face of Long Term Care

2009 – Issue 7

### Pain Management Is Key for Resident Well-Being

- ✓ **Over the past three years, the Illinois legislature has been faithful in continuing its commitment to the five-year phase-in of the resident-centered MDS reimbursement system. We thank Illinois legislators for their ongoing dedication to quality care for Illinois seniors.**
- ✓ **We need to continue the fourth, phased-in installment of the groundbreaking, resident-centered MDS Medicaid reimbursement system at a cost of \$90 million (\$36 million GRF).**
- ✓ **The MDS reimbursement system has been extremely successful in enhancing resident health, independence and well being. We have made great advances in providing cutting edge health services to Illinois' elderly citizens. Illinois needs to build upon its track record of success.**

*Editor's Note: In this story, the client's name was changed to protect her privacy and the confidentiality of her medical information.*

For most people, eating is a source of comfort and enjoyment. For Elaine Macy, it had become a source of pain.

When Elaine was admitted to Heartland Health Care Center in Paxton, IL, earlier this year, she was suffering from extreme lower back pain. She believed her serious gastric delay disorder was the source of the pain, which had become so great she was considering surgery.

"She was already being fed intravenously and was looking for a surgeon willing to implant a feeding tube into her stomach," said Cindy Scharp, administrator of Heartland Health Care Center. "On a scale of one to ten, she rated her pain at a seven."

Pain management is a key component of care at today's nursing facilities. But that doesn't simply mean distributing pills. In Elaine's case, in addition to pain meds, her physician ordered both physical and occupational therapy, something many of today's nursing facilities excel at.

Heartland's therapist evaluated Elaine's pain level and made recommendations for a specially designed back for her wheelchair and better positioning when she was upright. However, Elaine particularly responded to short wave diathermy, which utilizes an oscillating electric

current of extremely high frequency to therapeutically elevate the temperature of tissue.

"The radio frequencies are able to penetrate deep into the body tissue to stimulate blood flow and to heat the treated area," says Scharp. "This helps to reduce pain, spasm, and improve circulation."

Elaine's treatment has been a tremendous success. She now reports her pain at a two and is able to receive pain-free nourishment.

"She now feels she's regained her independence and plans to return to assisted living," says Scharp. "That's the reality of today's nursing facilities. Most of our folks go home."

The MDS reimbursement system provides specialized funding for pain management programs like the one benefiting Elaine at Heartland Health Care Center. Illinois needs to continue with the fourth installment of this reimbursement system to help Illinois seniors achieve their independence and return home. **In FY 2008, 38,000 nursing home residents returned home because of this innovative system.** We must build upon Illinois' track record of success in promoting resident autonomy, health and well being.