

## Long-Term Care Survey Alert

### Survey & Clinical News to Use

**A little education may help nursing homes do a better job accommodating residents' sexuality.** Workshop training for staff members proved to shift their attitudes about this oftentimes taboo topic, leading to a positive experience for one nursing home couple, according to researchers at Kansas State University's Center for Aging. The married couple moved into a room that provided two hospital beds. "One spouse had to have a leg elevated, but it was on the same side as the partner's bed, which made it hard for them to hold hands. Some staff members didn't see the importance of allowing the couple intimacy and said the problem couldn't be fixed," according to a press release from the university. "But someone who had been to our presentation encouraged everyone to move the furniture," said **Laci Cornelison**, a research assistant at the center in the release.

The researchers presented their findings at the October 2008 annual American Association of Homes & Services for the Aging conference. **Other tips:** "Do not disturb" signs is one way to give nursing home residents some privacy for sexual expression, according to aging experts at Kansas State University.

"By law you can't always lock a room, but you can offer residents some privacy," said **Gayle Doll**, director of Kansas State's Center on Aging in the release.

However, Alzheimer's and dementia raise questions about someone's ability to consent, and these conditions also may lead to inappropriate sexual behavior, the aging experts pointed out.

Doll noted that "even though we advocate for residents' rights, there are things that are inappropriate."

Next step: Researchers hope to see federal guidelines developed to help all nursing homes deal with sexuality in a positive way, especially as baby boomers age and bring their attitudes about sex with them to the nursing home, Doll said.

"Nursing homes are the second most regulated industry next to nuclear power, and yet these regulations don't address sexuality."

Is tougher HIPAA surveillance in the cards for 2009? In a recent report, the HHS Office of Inspector General criticizes the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' effectiveness of "oversight and enforcement of covered entities' implementation of the HIPAA Security Rule," according to a recent OIG report.

The OIG takes CMS to task for relying on complaints to identify noncompliant covered entities for investigation.

On the positive side, the OIG says CMS has begun taking steps to conduct compliance reviews.

Beware: Providers should be prepared for more compliance reviews from CMS in the coming months and years, experts predict. The report is at <http://oig.hhs.gov/oas/reports/region4/40705064.asp>.