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MEMBER



*Special needs require special lawyers.*

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## OAST & HOOK'S QUARTERLY SOCIAL WORKERS AND ADMINISTRATORS BREAKFAST

Oast & Hook will hold its quarterly Social Workers and Administrators Breakfast on Thursday, August 11th, at the Springhill Suites, 6350 Newtown Road, Norfolk, Virginia 23502. The guest speaker is Margaret A. Sgritta, Pharm.D., Certified Geriatric Pharmacist, who will present "Medications in the Elderly: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly," which will focus on pharmacology and how medications affect the elderly. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m., and the presentation begins at 8:30 a.m. Questions will be answered from 9:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. The breakfast is designed to be an educational opportunity for area professionals who work with seniors, the disabled, and their families. Seats are limited, so please register early for this breakfast by phoning Darcee Hale at 757-399-7506.

## MEDICATIONS AND SENIORS BY LETHA SGRITTA MCDOWELL

Medications are the most effective and popular tool physicians use to treat and cure illnesses. As time progresses, there are more and more medications available for the treatment of disease. This progress in medicine allows us to live longer and more independently than ever before. At the same time, it seems that we may be taking too many pills. As a group, older Americans take more medications than any other portion of the U.S. population. The use of medications in older adults is likely the result of the increased occurrences of chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. Without the effective use of medications, these conditions would be uncontrollable, and they could lead to disastrous results for many older Americans. As advantageous as medications may be, however, there are associated risks that appear to be amplified as an individual ages.

Physically, as the body ages, the ability to absorb medications into the blood stream changes. This affects how the medications react once they have been

taken. Many older adults are taking a variety of medications to control more than one chronic condition. Problems with medications can manifest themselves in a number of ways. The first and most common is that the individual may experience adverse side effects that occur in addition to the desired therapeutic effect. Side effects may vary depending on the individual's disease state, weight, gender, ethnicity, and general health. The older an individual is, however, the more likely the individual is to experience side effects.

Another, more problematic issue with medications is drug interactions. Drug interactions occur when the combination of two or more medications causes a negative reaction. There are three types of drug interactions described by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The following is taken from the FDA website:

Drug-condition interactions occur when a medical condition you already have makes certain drugs potentially harmful. For example, if you have high blood pressure or asthma, you could have an unwanted reaction if you take a nasal decongestant.

Drug-food interactions result from drugs reacting with foods or drinks. In some cases, food in the digestive track can affect how a drug is absorbed. Some medicines also may affect the way nutrients are absorbed or used in the body.

Drug-alcohol interactions can happen when the medicine you take reacts with an alcoholic drink. For instance, mixing alcohol with some medicines may cause you to feel tired and slow your reactions.

In order to get the best results possible from your medicines and avoid the interactions described above, Oast & Hook suggests you take the following steps:

1. Keep an updated list of current medications with you and share them with each physician you see. Many problems arise when an individual sees multiple physicians and none of them is completely informed about other prescribed medications.
2. Be sure to tell your physician of all medications you take, especially over-the-counter medicines, herbal supplements, and vitamins.
3. Limit alcoholic beverages if instructed by a physician. Americans over the age of 65 consume more alcoholic beverages than any other age group in America. Studies show a small amount of alcohol can have health benefits, but too much alcohol causes problems.
4. Take all medications exactly as prescribed, and, if you find yourself having a problem with a medication, then make an appointment to see your physician. Do not simply stop taking any medicine.
5. Consult a pharmacist. The American Society of Consultant Pharmacists and the Commission for Certification in Geriatric Pharmacy certifies pharmacists as Certified Geriatric Pharmacist

("CGP"). Individuals with a CGP designation have demonstrated expertise in the principles of geriatric pharmacotherapy and the provision of pharmaceutical care to the elderly. If you are an older adult and have questions regarding how your medicines affect you, then you may consider having a CGP perform a medication review. While the CGP cannot change your medicines, the CGP can analyze how you are taking your medications and make suggestions for you to take to your physician to help you get an improved result.

Medicines allow us to live longer, happier, and healthier, but as with anything else, too much can be a bad thing. Oast & Hook recommends that seniors be proactive when it comes to medications. If you are interested in having a medication review, Oast & Hook can assist you with finding a CGP.

<http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/ucm163959.htm>

### Ask Allie

O&H: Allie, we've heard about a mascot for a museum in Pennsylvania. Please tell us about him.

Allie: Sure! Frankie is a brown tabby cat who is the mascot of the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum outside of Pittsburgh. He is laid back and loveable, and easily befriends museum visitors, including groups of school kids. "Frankie is a celebrity here," says Scott Becker, the museum's executive director. "He is the friendliest cat I've ever met. He loves to be next to people." Frankie's fans started a Facebook fan page for him. The staff members say that the first thing they do when they arrive at work is look for Frankie. Frankie apparently was left in the museum parking lot in 2009, and after a few days, the staff couldn't resist taking him in. Frankie's formal name is Frank J. Sprague, after the man called the "Father of Electric Traction," but he usually goes by his more informal name. His duties include greeting museum guests, keeping the staff and volunteers company while they work, and serving as resident exterminator. He is also a morale-booster and uplifter. He roams the museum, hangs out in the office with staff members, and explores the trolley maintenance and restoration shop. For more information about Frankie and the museum, you can visit [www.patrolley.org](http://www.patrolley.org), or check out Frankie's fan page on Facebook. What a fun job! I enjoyed my time visiting clients and staff at Oast & Hook, and now I'm enjoying retirement. See you next week!

### Distribution of This Newsletter

Oast & Hook encourages you to share this newsletter with anyone who is interested in issues pertaining to the elderly, the disabled, and their advocates. The information in this newsletter may be copied and distributed, without charge and without permission, but with appropriate citation to Oast & Hook, P.C. If you are interested in a free subscription to the *Oast & Hook News*, then please e-mail us at [mail@oasthook.com](mailto:mail@oasthook.com), telephone us at 757-399-7506, or fax us at 757-397-1267.

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