June 15, 2015

Q: We have a resident who wants to use a “natural specialist” or a homeopath using alternative medicine for their care. How is this best handled in a long term care facility.

A: The Nursing Home Care Act (NHCA) and the corresponding regulations (Code) require that every resident shall be under the care of a physician. A physician is defined as “any person licensed to practice medicine in all its branches as provided in the Medical Practice Act of 1987.” The Act and Code also state that all residents shall be permitted their choice of physician and be permitted to participate in the planning of their total care. Since “natural specialists” and/or homeopaths are not licensed physicians as defined in the NHCA, they cannot dictate care or write orders for the resident without the consent of the resident’s physician. They can assist/coordinate care together, but the physician has the ultimate say and responsibility for the resident’s medical care.