

## **Seniors eligible for free drug counseling**

### **Individual help for managing medications**

KAREN GARLOCH

[KGARLOCH@CHARLOTTEOBSERVER.COM](mailto:KGARLOCH@CHARLOTTEOBSERVER.COM)

N.C. seniors will be eligible for free counseling from pharmacists about their medications through a new program launched Thursday. It's called CheckMeds NC.

The program is sponsored by the N.C. Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission, which allocated \$2 million over the next two years for the service.

It builds on the commission's community-based Medication Assistance Program. Pharmacists, who have contracted with the commission, will provide medication therapy management and counsel seniors on the most appropriate and cost-effective use of their Medicare prescription drug plan.

All N.C. residents, age 65 and older who are enrolled in a Medicare Part D plan, are eligible for the free service at participating pharmacies.

Although medication therapy management is required under Medicare Part D legislation, prescription drug plans are not required to provide it in a face-to-face setting or to use pharmacists for the counseling. Most plans provide the service over the phone using nonpharmacists.

CheckMeds NC will provide a one-on-one session between seniors and pharmacists during which they will review all prescriptions, over-the-counter and herbal medicines, vitamins and supplements.

Open enrollment for Medicare Part D for 2008 begins Nov. 15. For info on CheckMeds NC, call 866-922-6247 toll-free or go online to [www.checkmedsnc.com](http://www.checkmedsnc.com).

---