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### Can assisted living facilities safely care for Alzheimer's patients?

Posted on: 8.19.2009 4:21:26 PM Posted by [Jonathan Rosenfeld, LTC Lawyer](#)

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Is it fair to expect assisted living facilities (ALFs)—loosely regulated entities that help residents with daily living activities—to care for a person with Alzheimer's? ALFs are intended to provide a semi-structured environment to a primarily elderly group. Meals are prepared and staff is intended to provide residents with daily living activities. Unlike nursing homes, ALFs are not intended to provide skilled nursing care.

When it comes to Alzheimer's patients, many ALFs have begun to accept these people despite the fact that many offer no specialized care program for them. Unfortunately, such patients may encounter many problems while living in an assisted living environment that may never have been designed with them in mind. Of course, depending on the individual facility, the levels of care may be different.

From a legal standpoint, if a facility is unable to provide the level of care required, the facility should advise the family. ALFs may never mention to the family that their loved one may be better off in a nursing home or alternative facility that specialized in Alzheimer's care.

Take the case of Ruby Larson, an Alzheimer's patient, who on July 23, 2007, wandered from **Pheasant Pointe Retirement and Assisted Living Residence**, never to be heard from again. Last

### Poll Question:

**In regards to recent controversy concerning end-of-life care in healthcare reform legislation, I believe:**

- Some seniors will be steered toward end-of-life care to save money
- Legislation was not thought out well enough to address this issue
- It's too soon to make out what this legislation is trying to accomplish

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year a judge declared Larson to be legally dead as the search for her was fruitless. Larson, 75, was admitted to Pheasant Point in May, 2007, suffering from dementia, memory loss, and disorientation. During the three months Larson was a patient at Pheasant Point, she wandered from the facility on three separate occasions.

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Larson's family filed a lawsuit against Pheasant Point and its parent company, **Spectrum Retirement Communities of Oregon**, claiming the staff failed to properly supervise Larson and that the companies should have known that she required care only a specialized Alzheimer's care unit could provide.

By accepting an Alzheimer's patient for care, there is an implicit agreement that the ALF will provide the necessary care required. Like it or not, the facility exposes themselves to potential liability for problems that may arise in the course of their care.

**Jonathan Rosenfeld is a lawyer who represents people injured in nursing homes and long-term care facilities. Jonathan has represented victims of nursing home abuse and neglect throughout Illinois and across the country. Visit his personal blog at [www.nursinghomesabuseblog.com](http://www.nursinghomesabuseblog.com).**

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