



What Consumers Want To Know When Selecting a Nursing Home

2008 STUDY ON
CONSUMER CHOICE


MY INNERVIEW
BECAUSE KNOWING MORE MATTERS MOST™
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Choosing an appropriate long-term care facility for a loved one can be daunting. When faced with the challenge, most consumers find that they have little relevant experience to guide their decision. Current resources, including the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services Web site, *Nursing Home Compare* (www.medicare.gov/nhcompare) and its *Five Star Rating Program*, present data based upon regulatory results, staffing ratios and clinical outcomes. While these measure an aspect of quality that the public should be aware of, few studies, if any, have collected the most important information of all: What do consumers need to know to make a well-informed choice about long-term care?

In 2008, My InnerView conducted focus groups in nursing homes nationwide to answer that question. The research encompassed 33 focus groups and solicited the opinions of long-term care residents, short-term patients, caregivers, professionals and the public at large.

RESULTS

During the focus groups, participants were asked to discuss the factors that influenced their decision to select their current provider, as well as other factors by which they evaluate the quality of their current provider. Participants were further presented with various factors used by government agencies and other ratings sources that provide information to the public. Participants were asked to evaluate how important these sources of information would be in selecting a nursing facility in the future. The focus

group protocol had two components:

- (1) an evaluation of data that could be available to guide their decision, and
- (2) an open forum on what participants found to be important to their experience.

Making informed choices

Participants were presented with general types of information that could potentially be available through consumer education resources and Web sites. These data sources included regulatory survey results, clinical indicators, workforce stability (turnover and retention), employee satisfaction and resident/family satisfaction. Overwhelmingly, long-term residents reported that knowing how satisfied current residents and family members are would be the most important (75%) and that regulatory survey results would be the least important (3%). (SEE FIGURE 1) Clinical indicators scored second (11%) in order of importance, while employee satisfaction and workforce stability scored third (6% each). Results were similar for short-term patients, although clinical indicators scored higher as an important factor (23%).

Family members were more diverse in the evaluation of various factors. In the “most important” category, resident and family satisfaction still ranked first (38%), but by a smaller margin than with either short- or long-term residents. Clinical results scored higher (31%) for family members than for either type of resident. Regulatory survey results received the least votes for most important (6%) for families than for any other group.

Figure 1

INFORMATION THAT MATTERS MOST TO CONSUMERS

1 = most important, % = participants rating each level

	LONG-TERM RESIDENTS	SHORT-TERM PATIENTS	FAMILY MEMBERS
1 Resident/Family satisfaction	75%	56%	38%
2 Clinical indicators	11%	23%	31%
3 Workforce stability	6%	10%	19%
4 Employee satisfaction	6%	8%	6%
5 Regulatory survey results	3%	3%	6%

Figure 2

FACTORS THAT MATTER MOST TO CONSUMERS

1 = most important

	FAMILY MEMBERS	LONG-TERM RESIDENTS	SHORT-TERM PATIENTS
Employee relationships and performance	1	1	1
Clinical care	2	5	4
Ancillary services	3	2	3
Environment	4	3	2
Food	5		5
Safety	6	4	
Cost	7		6

Despite differences between types of participants, the results concur with what is most important and least important in evaluating and choosing a nursing home. Using data that is likely to be available to the consumer at the time of selection, participants in the focus groups all felt that resident and family satisfaction rates would be an important consideration and that regulatory survey results would not.

Evaluating facility performance

Factors that influenced participants' opinions about the quality of their current facility included employees, clinical care, ancillary services and environment. Respondent feedback is detailed above. (SEE FIGURE 2)

For all participants, the most often discussed aspects of performance were employee-related factors, including the care and services provided by the employee, the stability of the workforce and the relationship that the employee has with the resident. Other factors, including clinical care, ancillary services, environment, food, safety and cost, are rated according to the number of times discussed in the focus groups.

Detail on performance factors

EMPLOYEES

The most discussed factor was related to employees, especially their relationship with the resident or

patient. Second was the assistance provided by, and the perceived availability of, employees. This subcategory factored in comments related to answering call lights and other measures of staff availability. Residents rated the clinical expertise or education evident in the staff as the third subcategory, whereas caregivers rated employee stability as third. Other subcategories relating to the quality of employees included efficiency, cultural similarity with the resident, communication with the family, availability of a physician, employee satisfaction and other general comments.

Family members, long-term residents and short-term patients all ranked the relationship between a staff member and a resident/patient as the most important factor. Availability of staff was second in this category.

ENVIRONMENT

Not as many participants discussed environment; however, those who did proved to be passionate about the factor. The most discussed component of environment was cleanliness, and a subcategory of cleanliness was that the facility be free of odor.

ANCILLARY SERVICES

The next most discussed category of factors was ancillary services. Rehabilitation was the service discussed the most. This can be attributed to a significant portion of the resident sample representing short-term patients receiving physical and/or occupational therapy post-surgery or injury.

The second most discussed subcategory was about types and availability of activities.

CLINICAL CARE

Nearly a quarter (22%) of participants discussed care. Components of care included the importance of the facility's ability to provide services for disease-specific care.

FOOD

Finally, a number of participants discussed both positive and negative aspects of food related to quality, taste and the overall dining experience.

National satisfaction results agree

The results of this focus group study concur with those of resident and family satisfaction surveys, also

conducted by My InnerView in 2008. The surveys collected the opinions of nearly half a million residents and families from over 5,000 long-term care facilities nationwide. The data provide an empirical evaluation of the importance of various characteristics of long-term care facilities to the involved stakeholders.

The care and services provided by the employee — and the relationship that the employee has with the resident — rate as being critical indicators of how well a resident or family member will recommend the facility. Figure 3 (below) details the importance of each factor on My InnerView's satisfaction survey to the all-important measure of how well the respondent would recommend the facility.

Figure 3

DRIVERS OF "RECOMMENDATION"

Listed by level of importance to each group

FAMILY MEMBERS		RESIDENTS	
Care (concern) of staff	1	Care (concern) of staff	1
RN/LVN/LPN care	2	Competency of staff	2
Respectfulness of staff	3	Choices/preferences	3
CNA/NA care	4	RN/LVN/LPN care	4
Choices/preferences	5	Safety of facility	5
Competency of staff	6	Responsiveness of management	6
Safety of facility	7	CNA/NA care	7
Responsiveness of management	8	Respectfulness of staff	8
Attention to resident grooming	9	Attention to resident grooming	9
Commitment to family updates	10	Resident-to-staff friendships	10



Contributors to this report include: **BRADLEY N. SHIVERICK**, C.P.H.Q., My InnerView Vice President; **RAJEAN P. MOON**, Ph.D., consultant; and **SAMANTHA MABRY**, research consultant. See www.myinnerview.com or call 715-848-2713 for more information.

My InnerView is an applied research company that currently works with over 8,000 nursing facilities, assisted living facilities and other long-term care settings across the United States to promote quality improvement through evidence-based management.