

The Nursing Home Compare Report Card: Perceptions of Residents and Caregivers Regarding Quality Ratings and Nursing Home Choice

Take Away Points

- Understanding how patients use information is a key component of patient activation and patient-centered health care.
- Providing information about quality measures to consumers allows them to make more informed choices when searching for a nursing home, and could potentially improve overall quality in long-term care facilities.
- Quality measures data should be presented in a simple, intuitive layout, taking into account the limited Internet, numeracy, and health literacy of the targeted audience.

The Issue

In 2002, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services began publicly reporting nursing home quality measures on the [Nursing Home Compare \(NHC\)](#) website in response to concerns about low quality in these institutions. Each nursing home was rated on staffing, inspection results, and 10 clinical quality measures. The goal was to improve informed decision making by consumers while concurrently prodding nursing homes to improve their quality of care.

Despite the public availability of nursing home report cards, research indicates that consumers do not appear to use this information in choosing nursing homes. This could partly be due to the difficulty of interpreting report card information as well as consumer factors which might influence this decision making. Such individuals are older, less Internet literate, and have declining physical and cognitive abilities. To address the concerns that the information on NHC was difficult for consumers to interpret, Medicare introduced a five-star rating system in 2008, giving each nursing home a one to five “star” rating for three domains (health inspections and complaints, staffing, and quality measures) as well as an overall rating.

The objective of this qualitative study among a socioeconomically diverse sample of consumers and caregivers was to explore their perception of the content and format of quality data conveyed on the NHC website.

Study Methods and Design

Between October 2013 and August 2014, researchers conducted structured interviews with caregivers (n=29) who were in the process of choosing a nursing home and with residents (n=6) who recently chose a nursing home. Researchers used a purposeful sampling approach to recruit participants from diverse communities (urban vs. suburban) within a 75-mile radius of Philadelphia, as well as diverse racial and

Source

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<http://content.ebscohost.com/ContentServer.aspx?T=P&P=AN&K=115519802&S=R&D=a9h&EbscoContent=dGJyMMTo50SeqLI4yOvsOLCmR06eprdSsa%2B4S7SWxWXS&ContentCustomer=dGJyMPGuskyvpg5QuePfgex44Dt6fIA>

ethnic groups. The researchers assessed participants' perception of the salience of data on the NHC website, including star ratings, clinical quality measures, and benchmarking of individual nursing home quality with state and national data. The study also assessed participants' awareness of the NHC website, interpretation of hypothetical nursing home report cards (modeled after the NHC website), and how much data would be used by participants in making a nursing home choice.

Key Findings and Limitations



- Prior experience with the NHC Website:
 - Fewer than 25% of participants were aware of or had prior experience with the NHC website. Almost half of participants sought out information about nursing homes online.
- Participant Responses to Content and Format:
 - Five-Star Ratings: Respondents found the content of the five-star ratings to be valuable, familiar, intuitive and easy to understand. However participants varied in the domain most salient to their decision. Many participants (37%) seemed confused regarding the mathematical relationship between the overall rating composite score and the three components: health inspection, staffing, and quality measure ratings.
 - Clinical Quality Measure Rates: Respondents indicated they found quality measure rates valuable, useful, and of interest. Strategies noted for presenting quality measures included providing general information first, followed by limited detailed information.
 - Comparative Information: The NHC website's content allows for comparisons to be made between individual nursing homes as well as between a given nursing home and state and national data. The majority of respondents indicated this information was helpful in their decision-making process.
- Recommended Additions to the Quality Reports:
 - Participants suggested that quality reports include: activities, outdoor space, quality of food, and ratings provided by nursing home residents and their family members, to reflect the residents' experience living in the nursing home.
- Differences by Group Characteristics:
 - Participants who were older, with lower levels of education, or black were less likely to seek out formal quality information than other age, education, or racial groups.
 - Of note, none of the black participants reported having knowledge of NHC or using it when seeking formal quality information. In addition, fewer participants reported they would have used or plan to use NHC as an information source when choosing a nursing home after reviewing examples of the information available on NHC.

Limitations: The study's sample was small and localized to one urban area with only thirty-five interviews being completed by participants residing in Philadelphia or the surrounding area. Participants viewed screenshots of the NHC website and therefore, did not have the full website experience which would have allowed for a different experience.

Final Thoughts

- This study highlighted that quality measures information related to nursing homes needs to be presented with a simple, intuitive rating scale, taking into account that the targeted audience may have limited Internet, numeracy, and health literacy.