

What do aged care residents care most about? A study of resident and family preferences

Summary of a Flinders University Study, funded by the NHMRC Cognitive Decline Partnership Centre

Background

With the ageing of the population in Australia and internationally, the demand for aged care services will continue to grow. It is necessary that effective methods of monitoring and evaluating the quality of this care are developed. These should include the perspectives of consumers of aged care services themselves (older people and their family members) as an important component of evaluating the quality of residential aged care.

There is very little research that seeks to understand which aspects of residential aged care are important to older people and their families, and how different aspects are prioritised by different people.



Study snapshot

Aims

To better understand consumer (residents and family) preferences for six characteristics of residential aged care services. These characteristics were:

- Amount of time care staff spent with residents
- Homeliness of shared spaces
- Homeliness of resident's own room
- Access to outside and gardens
- Access to meaningful activities
- Flexibility of care routines

Method

A discrete choice experiment was undertaken with 126 aged care residents and 416 family members. A DCE is a particular research method used to evaluate preferences for different aspects of a service. This method enables better understanding of the importance to residents and family members of different aspects of a service.

Residents and family were asked to consider a series of scenarios describing two alternative residential aged care facilities with different characteristics, and choose which they would prefer.

Results

The study found that all six of the characteristics of nursing homes described in this study were important for residents and family members in determining preferences for residential aged care facilities. Although there were some differences between resident and family member preferences for particular characteristics, general themes were similar between the two groups.

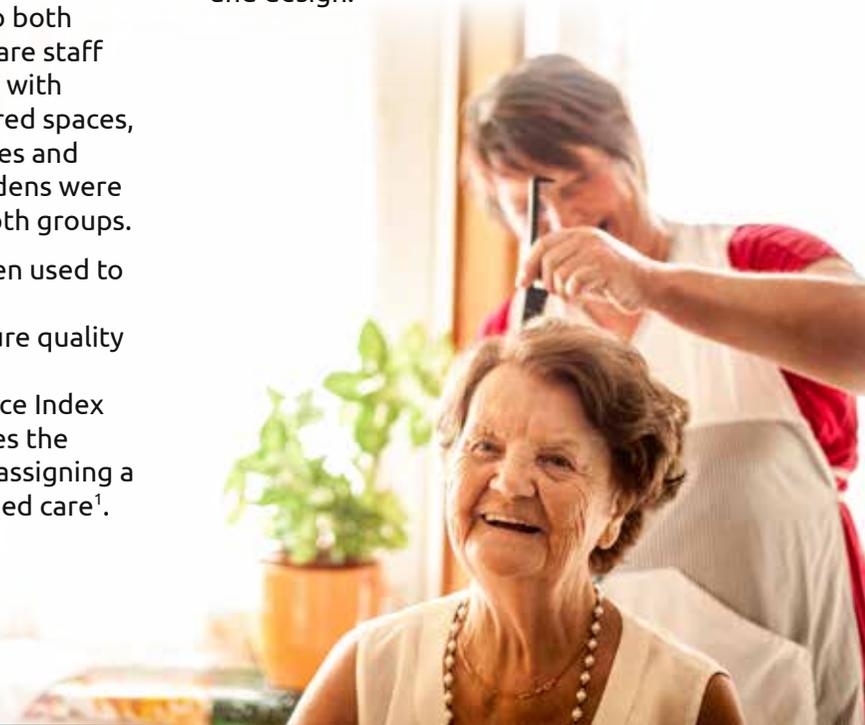
Discussion

This is the first study of the preferences of people living in residential aged care facilities and their family members for different characteristics of quality of care. All of the characteristics of residential aged care facilities described in this study were important to residents and their family members. Feeling at home in the resident's own room was most important to both residents and family members. Care staff being able to spend enough time with residents, feeling at home in shared spaces, staff being flexible in care routines and having access to outside and gardens were also particularly important for both groups.

The results of this study have been used to develop a scoring system for a questionnaire designed to measure quality of care from the consumer's own perspective – the Consumer Choice Index – 6 Dimension (CCI-6D), which uses the preferences of consumers when assigning a score of quality for residential aged care¹.

Conclusion

This study provides important insights into the characteristics of residential aged care that are most valued by residents and family and has enabled development of measures of quality of residential aged care from a consumer perspective which can be used in future service evaluation, planning and design.



1. Milte, R., Ratcliffe, J., Bradley, C., Shulver, W., & Crotty, M. (2017) Evaluating the quality of care received in long-term care facilities from a consumer perspective: development and construct validity of the Consumer Choice Index – 6 Dimension instrument. *Ageing and Society*. 1-23. DOI: 10.1017/S0144686X17000861