

A new way of measuring long-term aged care quality and choice from the consumer's perspective.

Development of a new quality-of-care measurement by Flinders University, funded by the Cognitive Decline Partnership Centre

With the recent introduction of consumer directed care in the Australian aged care sector, there is growing pressure for organisations to sustainably provide aged care home residents with increasing levels of flexibility and choice in their care, which can lead to improved quality of life and wellbeing.



Background

With the recent introduction of consumer-directed care in the Australian aged care sector, there is growing pressure for organisations to provide aged care home residents with increasing levels of flexibility and choice in their care, which can lead to improved quality of life and wellbeing. Research indicates that aspects of care provision in aged care homes that are important to residents and their family members include the way that staff provide the care, respect for the individual as a person, the physical and social environment, and the level of autonomy given to individuals.

Efforts to measure flexibility, choice and quality in aged care homes have to-date focused mostly on the perspectives and opinions of staff or independent assessors. However, in order to better meet the needs and expectations of residents and their family member carers, understanding the perspectives of the residents and family members (consumers) themselves is essential. The Consumer Choice Index – 6 Dimension (CCI-6D) questionnaire was designed to fill this gap.

The CCI-6D questionnaire measures six key characteristics of good quality care, which are the extent to which:

- (a) formal caregivers are able to spend enough time attending to individual's needs;
- (b) the shared spaces of the facility are home-like and non-institutional;
- (c) the individual rooms of the facility are home-like and non-institutional;
- (d) there is choice in access to outside and gardens;
- (e) there is access to meaningful activities individualised for the person;
- (f) there is flexibility in the time that care activities are undertaken.

Study aims

For a newly developed questionnaire such as this, it is important to evaluate whether the questionnaire measures what was originally intended – in this case, quality of care.

Researchers used the CCI-6D to ask residents (or their family members) living in aged care homes about the level of choice, flexibility and quality of care, and compared the results with existing related questionnaires and measures of care.

Results

The new CCI-6D questionnaire compared as expected with results obtained from the other related questionnaires undertaken on quality of life, care quality and physical aspects of the care facility. This indicates that the CCI-6D accurately measures quality-of-care and is able to evaluate quality of care from the perspective of consumers in aged care homes.

Implications

- The CCI-6D has been developed to specifically evaluate the quality of care in aged care homes from a consumer perspective.
- Organisations can use this questionnaire to properly evaluate the success of interventions and innovations to improve care from their customers' perspectives.