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2005 Annual Report

Picker/Commonwealth Program on Quality of Care for Frail Elders



A resident enjoys a moment at the Meadowlark Hills long-term care facility in Manhattan, Kan. At Meadowlark Hills, nursing home “culture change” is on full display. Its CEO, Stephen Shields, is currently working with the Fund to develop a set of tools for other nursing home operators that will enable them to provide resident-centered care.

Photo: Eli Reichman/Redux Plus

The concept of patient-centered care—care delivered in accordance with the needs and desires of patients—is starting to gain traction in health care, including the field of long-term care. When Congress passed the Omnibus Budget and Reconciliation Act of 1987, new standards for nursing home quality were put in place, giving resident-centered care a statutory basis and stimulating a handful of providers and long-term care professionals to think creatively about how nursing homes could be transformed.

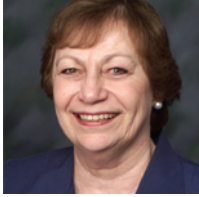
From these beginnings, efforts to move the culture of nursing homes from an institutional model to one centered on residents have attracted the attention of providers, consumer advocacy groups, and government agencies. The Picker/Commonwealth Program on Quality of Care for Frail Elders is deeply involved in these efforts. The projects it supports seek improvement in nursing home quality by testing and evaluating emergent models of resident-centered care and promoting nursing home “culture change” among stakeholder groups.

One of the most revolutionary ideas for what nursing homes should be comes from William Thomas, M.D. He argues that if nursing homes function as residents' homes, they should be built on a residential scale. Thomas has developed a model for small group homes, which he calls Green Houses, and a system for providing care that borrows from home care rather than the acute care practices that have shaped the industry.

With Fund support, the University of Minnesota's Rosalie Kane, M.D., has evaluated the first four Green Houses, which were built in Tupelo, Miss. Kane has found that, compared with their counterparts at older facilities, Green House residents, staff, and families are more satisfied and residents function at higher levels. Kane is now analyzing the business case for the Green House model, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is supporting its replication.

The Fund also has supported the development of the Wellspring model, in which nursing homes join together in ongoing quality improvement collaboratives. This past year, two new Wellspring alliances have been created, one in Maryland and one straddling North and South Carolina. In addition, Wellspring Innovative Solutions, the entity formed to disseminate the model, has developed a package of training materials that can be used by quality improvement organizations (QIOs).

Some nursing home facilities require practical guidance to put the tenets of culture change into practice. With Fund support, Stephen Shields, a leading proponent of resident-centered care and the CEO of Meadowlark Hills, a long-term care facility in Kansas, is producing a comprehensive "toolkit" for nursing homes operators, including a leadership guidebook, policy and procedure manuals, human resource management systems, and a quality improvement process that reinforces the philosophy of resident-centered care. Shields



Rosemary Fagan
Pioneer Network

and his mission were the focus of a CBS News segment in October 2005.

As part of its new Nursing Home Quality Initiative, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is making QIOs responsible for improving nursing home quality and requiring them to promote resident-centered care. To take advantage of this opportunity, the Fund is supporting the Pioneer Network, a diverse group of providers, researchers, and practitioners with long experience in nursing home culture change, to share its expertise and resources with QIOs and others interested in nursing home quality. The Pioneer Network’s “Summit 2020” provided an opportunity for newcomers to the culture change movement to meet the leaders, develop a shared understanding of resident-centered care, and map out strategies for change.

CMS’s “Eighth Scope of Work” for QIOs is to bring culture change to at least 10 percent of nursing homes in each state. To accomplish this, QIOs are expected to build coalitions of key stakeholders within their states. A Fund-supported meeting led by the Rhode Island QIO—the leading Nursing Home Quality Initiative—brought together interested parties to form such coalitions and begin work on state-specific action plans. Known as the St. Louis Accord, the gathering was attended by 377 people from all 50 states, including ombudsmen, surveyors, QIO staff, and members of nursing home trade associations.

When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast states in August, frail elderly adults, especially those living in long-term care facilities, suffered disproportionately. Mississippi Methodist Senior Services, which owns and operates the Green Houses in Tupelo, Miss., promptly acted on warnings of the impending storm and evacuated over 400 residents from their campuses in Biloxi, Hattiesburg, and Meridian to their more northern facilities. Because of the Fund’s involvement with the

Green Houses, a grant was made to assist Mississippi Methodist in caring for relocated residents in the storm's aftermath.

A number of other activities over the past year have cultivated a network of policymakers, health care providers, and researchers interested in nursing home quality improvement. At the "Pragmatic Innovations" meeting, jointly sponsored by the Fund and the National Institute on Aging, Philip Sloane, M.D., of the University of North Carolina disseminated an annotated bibliography on resident-centered care, including research on living space, regulations, organizational structures, and the business case for culture change. Meeting participants then drafted a report, to be submitted for publication, identifying gaps in the knowledge base and proposing a further research agenda.

This year also marked the second in a series of Fund-sponsored long-term care colloquia, "Building Bridges: Making a Difference in Long Term Care," held in conjunction with AcademyHealth's Annual Research Meeting. These colloquia provide unique opportunities for a diverse group of researchers, policy leaders, providers, consumer representatives, and funders to debate the issues, examine proposed solutions, review evidence, and identify additional research needs. This year's sessions covered affordable housing and long-term care services¹ and consumer-directed care and its implications for state and federal policy,² among other topics. To follow up on the interest expressed by policymakers attending the colloquium, a day-long session on consumer-directed long-term care will be held in conjunction with AcademyHealth's February 2006 Policy Meeting in Washington, D.C. Several researchers who attended the colloquium are preparing to study still unexplored areas relating to the Green House nursing home model, which was discussed by the housing-with-services panel.

Through this and other efforts, the Program on Quality of Care for Frail Elders is acting to help transform the nation's long-term care facilities into good places to live and work—high-performance organizations delivering resident-centered services.

NOTES

¹ S. M. Golant, "Affordable Clustered Housing Care for Older Americans: A Promising but Still Immature Long-Term Care Strategy," 2005 (working paper).

² R. Brown, "Consumer-Directed Care and its Implications for State and Federal Long-Term Care Policy," 2005 (working paper).