



EMBARGOED UNTIL: 6 PM, EST, August 6, 2006

CONTACT: Joan Eve Quinn (914) 378-2436 or Lynne M. Grasz (212) 873-5014
jqinn@consumer.org lmgrasz@aol.com

DESPITE FEDERAL LAW TO CLEAN UP NURSING HOMES, STATES HAVE OFTEN FAILED TO CORRECT PROBLEMS

***Consumer Reports* investigation finds poor care persists;
Not-for-profit homes generally provide better care than for-profit facilities**

YONKERS, NY – Two decades after the passage of a federal law to clean up the nation’s nursing homes, bad care persists and good homes are still hard to find, *Consumer Reports* (CR) finds in an investigative report published in the September issue. State agencies responsible for overseeing nursing home care have often failed to correct problems.

For its investigative report, “Nursing Homes: Business As Usual,” CR analyzed the three most recent state inspection reports for some 16,000 nursing homes across the U.S. and examined staffing levels and quality indicators, such as how many residents develop pressure sores when they have no risk factors for them.

Trudy Lieberman, Director of the Center for Consumer Health Choices, award-winning health care journalist and author of this report, stated, “It’s a national disgrace that 20 years after landmark legislation was passed nursing homes continue to provide poor care. We should no longer tolerate abuse and neglect in nursing homes. It’s way past time for the state and federal governments to force nursing homes to improve the quality of care and quality of life for some of our most vulnerable citizens—or put the facilities out of business for good,” she said.

The Consumer Reports Nursing Home Quality Monitor, financed by a grant from The Commonwealth Fund, a philanthropic organization, is available free at www.ConsumerReports.org/nursinghomes. This resource features a national database of homes to avoid and homes to consider—facilities in each state that rank in the best and worst 10 percent on at least two of CR’s three dimensions of quality. In addition, CR names the following 12 homes that have been on

each of its five lists of poorly performing homes since 2000. More details about these 12 homes and the complete list are available online at www.ConsumerReports.org/nursinghomes. The 12 homes are listed here alphabetically by state:

California: Fountain Gardens Convalescent Hospital, Los Angeles; Valley Manor Rehabilitation Care Center, Concord; White Blossom Care Center, San Jose. **Colorado:** Park Forest Care Center, Inc., Westminster. **Georgia:** Decatur Health Care Center, Inc., Decatur. **Indiana:** Wittenberg Lutheran Village, Crown Point. **Minnesota:** Rochester Health and Rehabilitation East, Rochester; Viewcrest Health Center, Duluth. **Missouri:** The Woodlands of Maryland Heights, Maryland Heights. **New Jersey:** Oceanview Center for Rehabilitation, Ocean View. **Ohio:** Lighthouse Pointe Health Care Center, Cincinnati; Northwood Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Dayton.

Additional content available on the Web site includes: A look inside a good nursing home; why it's getting harder to sue a nursing home; why the federal government's Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) Nursing Home Compare Web site falls short; and how to interpret the state survey report and why it's very important for consumers to read it.

CR helps consumers increase the odds of choosing a good nursing home with step-by-step shopping advice. CR's analysis found that not-for-profit homes generally provide better care than for-profit homes, and that independently run nursing homes appear to provide better care than those that are owned by chains. One reason the independently owned not-for-profit facilities might do a better job is that they tend to have more staff, which is crucial to good care.

The report discusses how the industry has whittled down the protections of the 1987 federal nursing home reform law through its influence in politics. Another problem is that regulators appear to be easing off on enforcement: Although the number of deficiency citations written by state inspectors has increased since 2003, state inspectors are now writing fewer deficiencies with codes that denote actual harm, such as avoidable pressure sores and medication errors. Further, violators often receive token fines or no fine at all. Regulators may be slow to impose fines, which tend to be low, and the fines are not always collected. The CMS can disqualify a home from the Medicare and Medicaid programs, cutting off federal funds, but that remedy, the most drastic in the agency's arsenal, is used less frequently than in the past.

The September 2006 issue of *Consumer Reports* is on sale August 8 wherever magazines are sold. To subscribe, call 1-800-765-1845.