Attitudes and Needs for Supervision and Care of Elderly or Impaired Individuals
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Assisted living is something that most people do not think about, either by choice or simply the thought has never crossed their minds. There are many common misconceptions about assisted living one being that it is basically a nursing home. There is actually a vast difference between nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Assisted living is for those who are still capable to do most things for themselves and are a lot more able bodied than those in nursing homes who are more often than not confined to beds and wheelchairs. Assisted living also may have residents who are not elderly, but have some type of disability that prevents them from successfully living on their own.

With approximately 10,000 people per day turning 65 years old there is a definite need for assisted living and with that research that can help improve the lives of those who need this resource. By the year 2030 it is estimated that there will be over 71 million Americans over the age of 65. It crucial to act now to learn the best ways to provide care for the aging and disabled population.

While there has been some research on how well patients do in assisted living as opposed to home care (Yamada, 2001) and the risks of depression in these facilities (Waston, et. al, 2003), there are many gaps. This study was created with the intention of discovering the needs and attitudes of the community when it comes to assisted living and long term care to help the possibility of creating more focused research and studies to better prepare the nation for the huge increase of people needing these services. The hope is that this will improve both the facilities and those who live and work in them.

Results:

- 24 percent of individuals were not aware of assisted living services for elderly and impaired.
- 26.4 percent were not aware of assisted living services for elderly and impaired individuals in Treasure Valley.
- 72.4 percent had some level of awareness of assisted living services for elderly and impaired individuals in the Treasure Valley.
- 94.2 percent had some level of agreeableness of the importance of the elderly and impaired population.
- 95.4 percent disagreed that elderly and impaired population is not important.
- 60.9 percent had some level of agreement that assisted living is a right of the people.
- 29.29 percent had some level of disagreement that assisted living is a privilege that people should provide for themselves.
- 40.2 percent has some level of agreement that assisted living is a privilege that people should provide for themselves.
- 28.7 percent had some level of disagreement that assisted living services should be funded by the legislature by means of taxes.
- 33.3 percent had some level of agreement that assisted living services should be funded by the legislature by means of taxes.
- 57.2 percent had some level of agreement that assisted living services should be funded by Medicare and Medicaid.
- 46.0 percent had some level of agreement that more funding for assisted living services should be provided by government programs such as Medicare and Medicaid.

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Discussion and reflections

Our research focus was on a description of the perceived needs, real needs, and the attitudes that contributed to any disconnect. The results of our survey reveled that the care of Idaho’s elderly and impaired populations is important to the public. There is a overwhelming understanding and awareness within the participants. This is encouraging given the nature of the topic being researched.

The results of our written responses showed that there was a lot of variation and difference in the services and perceived need of future care. This is not surprising because of the lack of preparation reported by participants. It was clear that many participants had not thought about their own needs should they need assisted living.

Future research should look at the real need and future needs attitudes of local legislature and a comparison to that of the public’s attitudes. This would provide insight to future passing of legislation dealing with long-term health care, including assisted living.

Limitations to this research is its small locality, which provides a problem with generalizability. Also the small sample could be a skewing factor because of the small size pulled from the population.

Our research group came away with new knowledge. All of us feel that it is very important to care for our elderly and impaired populations and walked away with a new understanding of the situation. We also have an understanding of the troubles that face assisted living facilities such as funding, living arrangements, and health issues. We feel that we have been well educated in the issue of assisted living, but do wish we had more guidance from the agency. As we look to the future, we hope that our project will benefit assisted living for future generations.