PSSRU research on care homes for older people
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The PSSRU has undertaken a series of large-scale surveys of care homes over the last 20 years. Some findings from a longitudinal survey of older people admitted as permanent residents with local authority financial support during the autumn of 1995 (Bebbington et al., 2001) and a cross-sectional survey of older residents and care homes conducted in the autumn of 1996 (Netten et al., 2001a) were presented in the 1998 issue of the Review (Darton, 1998).

Following these surveys, commissioned by the Department of Health, a study of self-funded older residents admitted to care homes in 1999/2000 was conducted for the Department for Work and Pensions (Netten et al., 2002). Current work is focusing on the causes, processes and consequences of care home closures, and variations in the social climate of care homes.

Findings relating to cognitive impairment are discussed by Netten et al. (2001b). Residents with severe cognitive impairment and those with frequent problem behaviours were more likely to occupy nursing places, although these factors were not associated with the type of placement in a multivariate analysis of predictors of admission. Cognitive impairment among self-funded residents was significantly lower than among publicly-funded admissions. However, among those with similar levels of physical ability, self-funded people with severe cognitive impairment were more likely to be in residential places than publicly-funded residents, suggesting that self-funders tend to take the lower-cost option. There was little evidence that prices within types of home varied according to levels of cognitive impairment, and cognitive impairment was not associated with survival except for the most severely cognitively impaired on admission. However, decisions about changing placement policies for publicly-funded residents with cognitive impairment need to take account of the quality of care received in different types of care home and outcomes for residents.

These studies were undertaken before the introduction of NHS-funded nursing care for self-funded residents in October 2001. It will be of interest to examine whether this will have any effect on the choices of homes made by residents and their families.

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References

Policy organisation and practice of specialist old age psychiatry in England

This was a cross sectional survey of consultants in old age psychiatry designed to describe and compare service arrangements according to three broad domains: (i) levels of professional autonomy (ii) degree of community orientation (delivery of and linked with community services) and (iii) degree of integration between health and social care provision. The work was funded by the NHS Executive North West as part of the portfolio of research within the North West Dementia Centre, a collaboration between the University of Manchester and the University of Liverpool. Contact: D.J.Challis@man.ac.uk