

LONG-TERM CARE RESOURCES ON THE INTERNET

Consumer Fact Sheet No. 4

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Thanks to the internet, accessible consumer information about long-term care is more readily available than ever before. Whether you are considering placing a loved one in a nursing home or your loved one is currently in a nursing home, understanding and critiquing internet information is crucial for making informed choices about long-term care. How do you know which resources are reliable? How do you interpret the wide variety of information? These are just some of the questions consumers should be asking when looking at information on long-term care on the internet.

This fact sheet gives specific questions consumers should ask to analyze long-term care information on the internet. Internet sites are listed as resources that consumers can access for information. Remember, the internet is a starting point for information on long-term care issues. Internet research *does not and should not* replace other types of research such as visiting a facility, talking to residents and other family members, and speaking with ombudsmen or citizen advocacy groups.

Questions to Ask When Visiting Long-Term Care Websites

Who is giving you the information?

The first question to ask yourself when you visit a long-term care website is: Who manages this website? For example, is the website run by the government, the long-term care industry, a consumer group, or some other entity? The information provided will vary according to who is managing the website. Understanding who is providing the information is key to determining the perspective and possible bias of the website.

What is the purpose of the website?

All websites have a purpose. It is important to understand that purpose when you are looking at a website. Some questions you should ask yourself are: Is the purpose of the website to provide unbiased information to consumers? Is it to get you to choose a certain nursing home that has paid to be listed? Is the site promoting different products for sale? Knowing the motivation behind the website is an important aspect of understanding the information provided.

How is the website funded?

(1) Get more information. Most websites will have a section titled "about us", or something similar that will explain the purpose and the history of the

website. You can also look for disclaimers that may appear in small print on the bottom of the home page.

(2) Look for advertisements. If the website has advertisements for health products, long-term care insurance, specific facilities, or other related items, it is likely that they receive funding from some aspect of the long-term care industry.

(3) Ask. Most websites will have a link where you can contact the webmaster. Do not be afraid to ask how their website and/or organization is funded.

Where is the website's information from?

It is important to look at the specific sources of information provided on the website. Are the data based on government, nursing home industry, or independent studies? Can you verify the websites assertions by viewing the original studies or data? Is the information on the website anecdotal or is it based on research? Asking yourself these questions will help you to effectively analyze the information you are reading.

Should I have to pay for this information?

No, as a consumer there are resources available to you for free.

Websites Consumers Can Access for Information on Long-Term Care

Consumer Websites

<http://www.nursinghomeaction.org>

The National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform (NCCNHR) provides information on quality care, residents' rights, and quality of life issues for nursing home residents. An easy to use map connects you to the key long-term care agencies in each state including citizen advocacy groups and their websites.

<http://www.ltombudsman.org>

You can find links to your local and state ombudsman offices through on the National Ombudsman Resource Center (NORC) website. Ombudsmen are resident advocates who work at both the regional and state-level. Many ombudsman programs sponsor websites with consumer information.

<http://www.aarp.org>

AARP is a nonprofit membership organization of persons 50 and older dedicated to addressing their needs and interests. A five-item preliminary check list about what consumers should look for when choosing a nursing home is available on this site.

<http://www.pioneernetwork.org>

The Pioneer Network is a group of elders, family members, healthcare professionals, researchers, advocates, and others working to transform traditional institutions and practices for the elderly into communities in which each person's capacities and individuality are affirmed and developed.

<http://www.memberofthefamily.net>

memberofthefamily.net is an independent website that provides information on nursing homes throughout the U.S. including reports and information based on recent government surveys.

<http://www.myziva.net>

This is an independent website that combines limited consumer information with extensive information for industry professionals. Information is available about licensed nursing homes from government data as well as information about specific facilities provided by facilities.

State and Federal Government Websites

<http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/Home.asp>

Nursing Home Compare is a federal government website run by the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services. Consumers can search nursing homes by state and research information on facility inspections (surveys) and quality measures.

<http://www.ahfsa.org>

The Association of Health Facility Survey Agencies sponsors this site. Consumers can find links to **state government offices** responsible for licensing and certifying nursing homes. Many state sites include inspection (survey) data, nursing home deficiency information, characteristics of nursing homes, staffing ratios and much more.

<http://www.eldercare.gov>

This website is sponsored by the U.S. Administration On Aging. It provides links to information and referral (I&R) services for state and area agencies on aging. These I&R programs can help consumers identify appropriate services in the area where family members reside.

Disease - Specific Sites

Many websites are sponsored by organizations with a mission to educate consumers on diseases commonly associated with long-term care residents.

Alzheimer's Disease: <http://www.alz.org>

Diabetes: <http://www.diabetes.org>

Heart Disease: <http://www.americanheart.org>

Incontinence: <http://www.incontinence.org>

Parkinson's Disease: <http://www.pdf.org>

More fact sheets and publications on how to get good care in nursing homes are available by calling NCCNHR at 202.332.2275 or visiting our website at www.nursinghomeaction.org

Nursing Homes: Getting Good Care There, \$11.95
A Consumer Guide to Choosing a Nursing Home:
Fact Sheet #1
Resident Rights: Fact Sheet #2

NCCNHR is a national, non-profit membership organization founded in 1975 by Elma Holder to protect the rights, safety, and dignity of America's long-term care residents.