

Partners in Quality Care

What is Quality Health Care?

Many of you may have heard news stories about issues with patient care such as using surgical instruments that were tainted, operations on the wrong body part of a patient and other similar stories, Talk about a quality of care disaster!

Businesses all across the world have spent millions of dollars trying to produce “quality” services and products. The federal government has an agency devoted to health care quality and research. Many authors have become rich writing books about how to achieve quality. Everyone is interested in quality and even rating systems for restaurants and hotels give us a heads up regarding what to expect in terms of service when we dine out or make a hotel reservation. Consumers can now check out the quality of care in nursing homes and home health agencies by using the internet.

And for sure, we all individually define quality by what we expect quality to be and carry our own “yardsticks” for seeing if services “measure up”.

Your agency probably includes the word quality in its mission statement. Your supervisor; your patient; your patient’s physician; the payer of services; and the federal and state regulators all desire quality care, but sometimes each one has a different definition or perception of quality.

- Your supervisor may define quality as when the aide completes tasks as assigned and turns in the required paperwork; when the patient is satisfied with the care; and, when the aide follows the policies of the agency.
- Your patient may define quality as when the aide arrives on time, listens attentively and shows compassion.
- The patient’s physician may define quality as when he receives very little paperwork from the agency to sign and does not hear any complaints from the patient or family.
- The payer may define quality as when the visit notes are present for every visit billed and when the payer’s policies are followed.
- Federal and State regulators may define quality as when the agency follows the many laws and regulations. *(continued next page)*



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Thanks for all you do everyday to provide care to your clients!



The federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality has published a booklet for consumers called *A Guide to Health Care Quality – How to Know it When You See It*.

In this book, they state that quality health care is:

- Doing the right thing (getting the health care services you need).
- At the right time (when you need them).
- In the right way (using the appropriate test or procedure).
- To achieve the best possible results.

www.ahrq.gov

Continued from the first page..... No matter what “yard stick” is used to measure quality health care, there is a cost to your agency in achieving and maintaining quality services.

The American Society for Quality has a web site (www.asq.org) devoted to articles on quality care. One, the “Cost of Quality” reminds us that the cost is not just the “price of creating a quality product or service. It’s the cost of **NOT** creating a quality product or service.”

Some ways that In-home aides can be involved in Quality Care for their clients are:

- Following the Plan of Care as written by the supervisor
- Reporting to the supervisor any problems or concerns regarding the client
- Calling the agency as soon as possible if you cannot get to work; be on time
- Being clean, neat, courteous and kind to your clients
- Follow your assignments as written and notify the supervisor if changes are needed or if the client/family are asking you to perform other duties
- Notify your supervisor when you are asked to perform a task you do not understand

There are certain ways that agencies try to determine the quality of their services, such as through Quality Assurance activities, supervision and oversight of staff, client satisfaction survey etc. to ensure they are providing their services according to all applicable laws, rules and standards.

Let’s consider that there is a *Golden Healthcare Rule*.

While it is true that your agency must meet standards and regulations in order to “measure up” to many, many different perceptions of quality, the *Golden Healthcare Rule* ask us to treat patients as we would want ourselves or our family members to be treated. So quality care does not just rest in books, complex processes, policies and standards. Quality care rests in our hands...as competent, compassionate caregivers... and that is the very best place that quality health care can be.

Quality Care Begins with Me!