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Assessing Barriers to Utilization of Adult Day Care Centers in a Rural County

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Introduction

Adult Day Care programs provide cognitively or functionally impaired adults with medical, social, and therapeutic services as well as offer valuable respite and education to family caregivers. The Visiting Nurse Association's Adult Day program manages three centers that offer these services and are located in Colchester, Williston, and South Burlington. We have explored the underutilization of these centers by comparing variables such as demographics, services provided, referrals, transportation constraints, and satisfaction surveys between centers and to national success guidelines for adult day services.

Methods

Three different analytical methods have been used to collect the data for this project:

- A survey assessing satisfaction was distributed to clients at each of the three sites of the VNA. The survey included questions regarding transportation, health care services, and socialization services. Surveys were completed by the VNA client or their caregiver.
- A standardized telephone interview was conducted with community referral services to assess referral rates to each VNA site and factors that influence which site a patient is referred to.
- A structured interview was completed with each site director inquiring about their perspectives regarding client medical needs, transportation needs, and socialization needs. Interviews also determined each center's utilization statistics and rates.

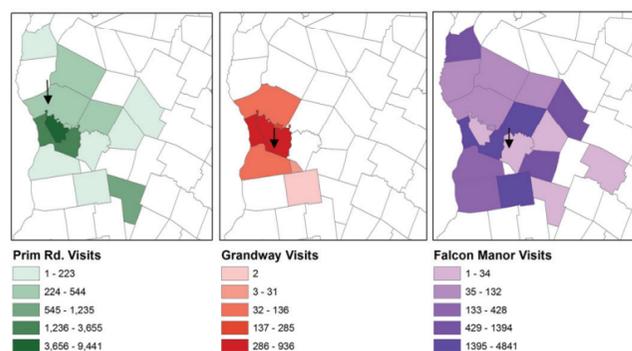


Figure 1. Geographical distribution by town of total client visits to VNA Adult Day Programs between (1/1/2003 and 12/31/2008). Black arrows represent location of specific program. Additional towns utilizing the Adult Day services not shown include Barre and South Hero, VT, as well as Dedham, Northampton, Leominster and Merrimack, MA.

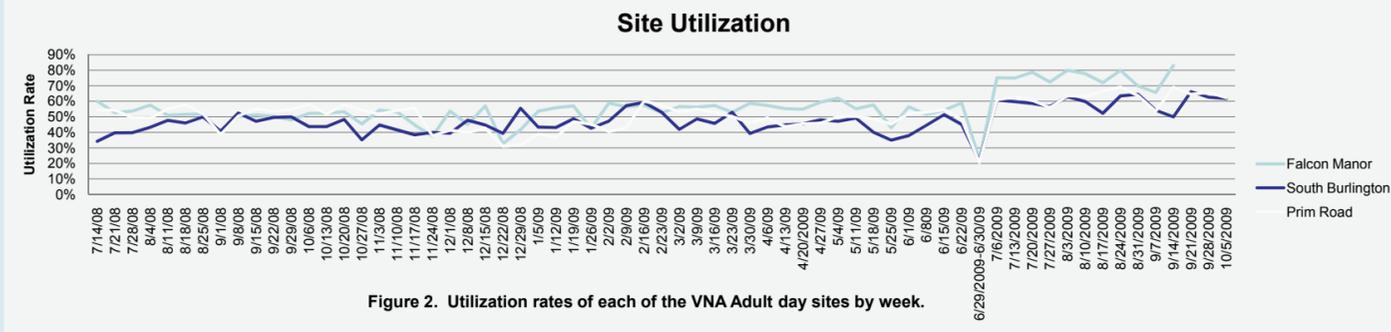


Figure 2. Utilization rates of each of the VNA Adult day sites by week.

Results

Surveys Distributed to VNA Clients (Figure 3)

The results of the survey (n=29) indicate client satisfaction especially in the areas of socialization, caregiver respite, quality of activities, and management of medical needs.

Transportation questions indicate a substantial difference between the sites. 50% of South Burlington clients, 36% of Falcon Manor clients, and 50% of Prim Rd. clients agreed that transportation complications influence their attendance to the program.

Clients at all sites have difficulty arranging transportation and would appreciate a low cost option. They account for 40% of all question respondents. However, only 30% of question respondents agreed that a low cost option would help them attend more regularly.

When asked why clients chose to attend VNA adult day program, 60% cited that the particular site they attended was close to home. Significantly, 75% cited referral from friends, family, and/or their healthcare provider.



Figure 3. Graphic representation of selected client survey items.

Interview with Referrers (Figure 5)

On average, each of twelve referral services we interviewed has referred 10 to 20 clients to the VNA for Adult Day Care in the past year. Location is the most common factor considered by referrers when deciding between the various VNA sites. Two referrers feel that the Prim Road site is inconveniently located.

Client medical needs is the second most common factor considered by referrers. Referrers commented that the Prim Road site "is more for medical needs than social needs" and "tends to have an older, frailer population." Three out of twelve referrers are less likely to refer clients to the Prim Road site, citing inconvenient location and lack of socialization.



Figure 4. Responses by site directors in regards to medical needs of the average client.

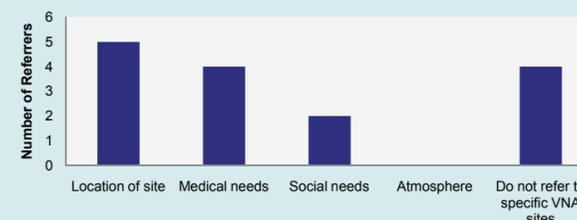


Figure 5. Graphic representation of interview with referrers.

Discussion

A national study of adult day services conducted by the Robert Wood Johnson foundation, Partners in Caregiving, determined that adult day programs in Chittenden County appear to be in excess capacity of the population in need of them.

These circumstances reflect the overall underutilization of the Visiting Nurses' Association three adult day programs (Figure 2). According to client surveys, satisfaction is high among those who attend. Clients across all three programs are happy with the quality of activities, improvement in mood, and respite for caregivers.

However, a portion of the clients, especially those at Prim Road, have difficulty arranging transportation. Prim Road currently allocates resources providing transportation for clients who may be able to attend other sites at less cost. Transportation is one factor among many that influences attendance. Our survey also shows that clients choose to attend the program based upon recommendations by family, friends, and healthcare providers. Reputation and community perceptions, especially of referrers, strongly influence the site that clients choose to attend. Healthcare providers who were interviewed consider location and medical needs foremost in recommending a program. However, referrers perceive the three VNA sites differently in the activities and opportunities for socialization provided.

Despite the overall quality of the program, all three adult day centers are not operating at capacity. This appears to be due to several factors including transportation complications and referrer perceptions.

Recommendations

- Increase hours of operation from 7 am to 6 pm (RWJ)
- Pursue more aggressive marketing to caregivers, formal referral sources, and community organizations to make enrollment twice that of capacity (RWJ)
- Prim Road clients with transportation problems due to financial constraints could attend a center currently accessible via public transportation

Works Cited

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