

Meeting information needs to facilitate decision making: report cards for people with disabilities

Abstract:

Background

Several states within the United States offer low-income adults with disabilities a choice of health plans. No states issue comparative 'report cards' specifically for adults with disabilities.

Objective

To explore conceptualizations of quality, information needs, and report card preferences from the perspective of people with disabilities.

Research design

Eight focus group interviews were conducted in 2003. Existing report cards for California, Maryland, Michigan and Texas were shared for feedback.

Subjects

34 women and 15 men with various behavioural, physical or sensory disabilities in Oregon, California, Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia.

Results

Quality was mostly defined in terms of choice and disability sensitivity of service providers. Respondents identified various obstacles to receiving appropriate health plan and service information. All beneficiaries were keenly interested in the comparative health plan report cards, but did not think the report cards provided enough pertinent information, especially with regard to provider ratings, accessibility, disability competence and reasons for participating in the Medicaid program.

Conclusions

Existing comparative report cards omit several major content domains important to people with disabilities. Organizations providing decision support to people with disabilities should cultivate novel avenues for distribution, such as food banks, libraries and places of worship.

Keywords: Consumer Assessment of Health Providers and Plans; disabilities; information dissemination; Medicaid; patient satisfaction; quality indicators