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Long-Term Care and a Good Quality of Life: Bringing Them Closer Together FREE

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Abstract

Long-term care policies and programs in the United States suffer from a major flaw: They are balanced toward a model of nursing home care that, regardless of its technical quality, tends to be associated with a poor quality of life for consumers. This article proposes quality-of-life domains—namely, security, comfort, meaningful activity, relationships, enjoyment, dignity, autonomy, privacy, individuality, spiritual well-being, and functional competence. It argues that these kinds of quality-of-life outcomes are minimized in current quality assessment and given credence only after health and safety outcomes are considered. Five trends are reviewed that might lead to a more consumer-centered emphasis on quality of life: the disability rights movement, the emphasis on consumer direction, the growth of assisted living, increasing attention to physical environments, and efforts to bring about culture change in nursing homes. Building on these trends, the article concludes with strategies to move beyond current stalemates and polarized arguments toward forms of long-term care that are more compatible with a good quality of life.

Keywords: [Public policy](#), [Nursing homes](#), [Home care](#), [Assisted living](#)

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