

Addressing the Cultural Diversity in the Chinese-American Community

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Background

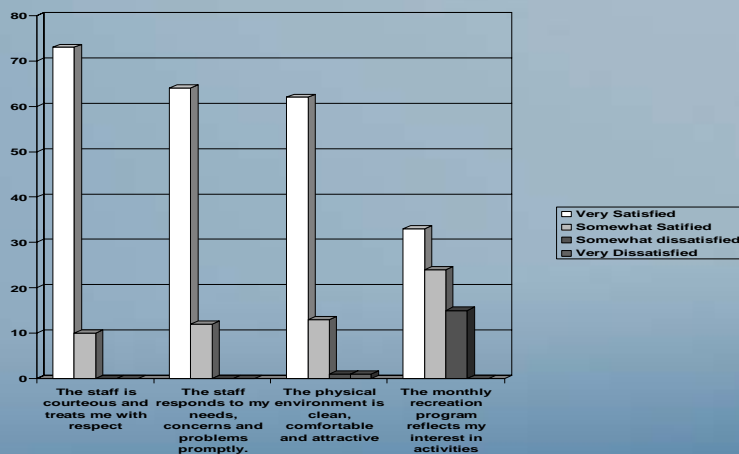
Parker Jewish Institute for Health Care and Rehabilitation is a comprehensive chronic care network located in Nassau County, New York. According to the 2004 Census, 1,317,054 people populate the Nassau-Queens community served by Parker. Of those individuals, 85,622 are Asian-American, an increase of over 20,000 since the year 2000. Chinese Americans, specifically, comprise this quickly escalating demographic group. From 1990 to 2000, New York City's Chinese American residents increased 61%, from 232,908 to 374,321. According to the Asian-American Federation, Chinese-Americans are the largest Asian-American group in New York City. This rapidly-growing immigrant population faces significant challenges, including newness to America, little formal education and language isolation. For these reasons, they rarely utilize social and medical services beyond those tendered by the few trusted providers in their own community, forcing them into isolation at home, and never overcoming their language and cultural barriers. This type of seclusion prevents Chinese-Americans from seeking the healthcare they need. Lack of appropriate preventative medical attention and inept specialized services can have drastic effects on quality of life, further resulting in unnecessary illness, premature institutional care, avoidable hospitalizations and even death.

Methods

Since Parker has become cognizant of the disconnect between the needs of Chinese-Americans and their limited access to fulfilling them, Parker began a program to target the underserved Chinese senior community of Queens regarding community and health services. A Medical Model Chinese Adult Day Health Care Program was initiated in 2002, offering social and medical services to the underserved Chinese-Americans in Queens and Nassau County. At Parker's facility, Chinese-Americans can enjoy a variety of services specifically targeted to this demographic group, emphasizing the culture and traditions that they are accustomed to, while also integrating Chinese and American customs. For example, consumers can visit with Chinese speaking Certified Nursing Assistants and pharmacists. They can attend lectures on issues regarding medicine and dentistry, focusing specifically on the needs and concerns of Chinese-Americans. Instruction in English language is also offered. All Chinese holidays are celebrated, such as the Moon Festival, Chinese New Year and Lantern Day. Additionally, there are therapeutic exercise and dance classes as well as Tai-Chi programs. Chinese meals are also offered to day-care attendees. In order to assess satisfaction, surveys were mailed to 113 program participants. The surveys were administered in Chinese and assessed degree of satisfaction with staff, the environment, recreation programs, food and transportation. Ninety-two surveys were returned, yielding a response rate of 81%.



Results of satisfaction surveys for Chinese Adult Day Care participants
N=92



Results

The feedback from the satisfaction surveys showed high satisfaction with various aspects of the Chinese Adult Day Care program. Specifically, 100% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the courteousness of the staff. An additional 97% were satisfied or very satisfied with the physical environment of the day care facility. Eighty-six percent were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality, variety and food and found it nutritious and appetizing. Eighty-eight percent were satisfied or very satisfied with the timeliness and safety of the transportation provided. In regards to the recreation programs offered, 79% were satisfied or very satisfied and 15% somewhat dissatisfied.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it appears as though the Chinese Adult Day Care program has been a successful endeavor in bridging the gap between Chinese Americans and access to medical care, specialized services, healthcare networks and social programs. This particular program has successfully created a social environment allowing participants to interact with others who share similar culture and values. The success of the program, as measured by the high levels of satisfaction of its participants, is direct evidence that by allowing foreign-born individuals a comfortable haven, taking into account their specific language, culture, recreational and dietary needs, barriers to medical care, healthcare services and social interactions can be broken down.

