

Helping Older Adults Assess Their Need for Future Home-Support Services

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What was the research about?

Many adults would like to remain in their homes as they get older. Falls, illnesses that require hospital stays, or memory loss can make living at home hard. Older adults may be able to remain in their homes and get better care if they plan for home-support services in advance.

The research team created and tested the Plan Your Lifespan website (www.planyourlifespan.org) to help older adults and their families create a plan for getting home care as the older adults age. The website is publicly available and free to use.

What were the results?

Compared with a group of older adults who viewed a website with information about physical activity, older adults who viewed the Plan Your Lifespan website

- Did more planning for future home care needs
- Rated home care planning as more important
- Knew more about available home care services
- Were more satisfied with the website they viewed

There was no difference between groups in how confident older adults were in finding and getting home care services.

Who was in the study?

The study included 385 English-speaking adults ages 65 and older from Illinois, Indiana, and Texas. Of these adults, 63 percent were white and 37 percent were

other races. The average age was 72, and 80 percent were women. All adults in the study said they used computers or smartphones.

What did the research team do?

To create the website, the research team talked with older adults about their future health needs and their planning strategies. The team also talked with community leaders, area agencies on aging, nurses, doctors, and others to decide what to put on the website.

Then the research team assigned older adults by chance to one of two groups. The first group viewed the Plan Your Lifespan website. Those in the second group viewed a website about physical activity that had no information about planning for home-support services.

The research team gave a survey to all adults in the study before and after they viewed their assigned website and then again one month and three months later. The survey asked

- How much planning older adults had done
- How important home care planning was
- How confident they were in finding and getting home care services
- How much they knew about available home care services

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- How satisfied they were with the website they viewed

What were the limits of the study?

This study wasn't long enough to find out if older adults used the plans they created. Future research could follow older adults for longer. The older adults who took part in the study were mostly white and female. Future studies could test whether the website works well for a more diverse group of people.

How can people use the results?

Older adults and family members may be able to use a website to help make plans to get the home care they need to remain at home as they age.

To learn more about this project, visit www.pcori.org/Lindquist118.