

FATE

FOUNDATION AIDING THE ELDERLY

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WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A NURSING HOME

The following are some tips on what to look for in a nursing home to help prevent bad care and abuse of your loved one.

Get a durable power of attorney for medical care so that you can make health care decisions and review medical records.

Request a complete facility profile from the State Health Department, Licensing and Certification Department for the facility you intend to use. Note the number of complaints, the fines assessed and whether the fines have been paid.

Notice how many people in the facility seem to be in stupors or in bed or unable to walk or talk. If many patients fall into this category, be wary of overmedication at the facility, especially with the psychotropic drugs Haldol, Thorazine, Mellaril and Prolixin.

Visit at different times during the day, including meal times. Take notice of the types of food and nutritional balance. Dehydration is a problem, so make sure water is available at all times and that it is easily accessible to the patient.

Be sure the patient is actually seen by the doctor and talk with the doctor personally. If the doctor is difficult to contact, bring in another doctor to examine the patient.

Make sure all recommended care is given, such as physical therapy. Stop by when such activities are scheduled.

Take seriously any complaints the patient has about mistreatment by the staff, such as "they pull my hair", "they are mean to me". Don't accept the facilities statement that the patient is old and doesn't know what's going on.

Check the patient's body for bedsores, particularly the tailbone, feet and hips. Stage 4, the most serious stage of bedsores, causes death in many cases.

Take an interest in other patients. Talk with their relatives about problems and the care being given.

Report any signs of bad care to the state licensing office in your state that licenses and regulates nursing homes. Be sure to follow up on the complaint to insure accountability.

Do not be intimidated by threats from the facility such as kicking the patient out of the facility because of complaints or the facility's refusal to cooperate with requests for information.

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