



The continued success of registered nurse care coordination in a state evaluation of aging in place in senior housing

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ABSTRACT

Older adults prefer to age in place, remaining in their home as their health care needs intensify. In a state evaluation of aging in place (AIP), the University of Missouri Sinclair School of Nursing and Americare System Inc, Sikeston, MO, developed an elder housing facility to be an ideal housing environment for older adults to test the AIP care delivery model. An evaluation of the first 4 years (2005–2008) of the AIP program at TigerPlace ($n = 66$) revealed that the program was effective in restoring health and maintaining independence while being cost-effective. Similar results evaluating the subsequent 4 years (2009–2012) of the program ($N = 128$) revealed positive health outcomes (fall risk, gait velocity, Functional Ambulation Profile, handgrips, Short-Form 12 Physical Health, Short-Form 12 Mental Health, and Geriatric Depression Scale); slightly negative activities of daily living, independent activities of daily living, and Mini-Mental State Examination; and positive cost-effectiveness results. Combined care and housing costs for any resident who was receiving additional care services and qualified for nursing home care ($n = 44$) was about \$20,000 less per year per person than nursing home care. Importantly, residents continued to live in private apartments and were encouraged to be as independent as possible through the end of life.

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Introduction

Older adults want to age in place. According to a 2010 American Association of Retired Persons survey, 88% of people age 65 years and over want to stay at home as long as possible (AARP, 2010), retaining as much independence and health as possible (Marek and Rantz, 2000; Rantz, Marek, & Zwygart-Stauffacher, 2000; Rantz et al., 2005a). The aim of aging in place (AIP) is to help people remain in their home as their health care needs intensify (Marek & Rantz, 2000). Legislation was passed in Missouri in 1999 and 2001 to test an AIP model. In response, the University of Missouri (MU) Sinclair School of Nursing (SSON) partnered with Americare Systems, Inc, Sikeston, MO, to build TigerPlace, a senior housing facility. An evaluation of the first 4 years (2005–2008) of the AIP program at TigerPlace revealed that the program was effective in restoring health and maintaining independence while being cost-effective (Rantz et al., 2011). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the second 4 years of the AIP model. Ongoing evaluation of the AIP program is important to ensure it remains an effective alternative to nursing home and other long-term care options.

Background

MU SSON faculty envisioned an AIP model of care delivery that incorporated ongoing registered nurse (RN) care coordination with home health services. The model was envisioned to provide the right care services at the right time to enable maximum restoration of function and independence so people can live in the environment of their choice. The MU SSON received a \$2 million grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) services to begin a home health agency and evaluate the AIP. In 1999, Sinclair Home Care, a Medicare- and Medicaid-certified home health agency, was established (Marek & Rantz, 2000; Marek, Rantz, & Porter, 2004) and operated by a department within the MU SSON. Sinclair Home Care provided home care services to six counties in the mid-Missouri region. The AIP model was tested in the Missouri Care Options (MCO) program, which offers home and community long-term care services to adults who are Medicaid eligible and in need of assistance. Sinclair Home Care sold the Medicare and Medicaid lines of business in 2009 but retained the private pay business so care services could continue at TigerPlace.

The results of an evaluation of AIP in the community indicated that RN care coordination improved outcomes for older people in the MCO program when compared with those in the MCO program without RN

care coordination (Marek, Popejoy, Petroski, & Rantz, 2006) and individuals of a similar case mix in nursing homes (Marek et al., 2005). The total Medicare and Medicaid costs were significantly lower (\$1,591.61 per month) in the AIP group compared with nursing home care (Marek, Stetzer, Adams, Popejoy, & Rantz, 2012). Also, the cost to Medicare was lower (\$686 per month) in the group with RN care coordination compared with those without RN care coordination (Marek, Adams, Stetzer, Popejoy, & Rantz, 2010). Based on positive results of the CMS evaluation, MU SSON faculty began working with Americare Systems to build TigerPlace, which was designed as an ideal senior housing environment for older adults to age in place and in which the AIP model could be further refined and tested.

TigerPlace

TigerPlace is built to nursing home standards, licensed as an intermediate care facility (ICF) with some regulatory exceptions, and operates as independent housing with services available, allowing people to maximize independence and live in their apartments through the end of life (Rantz et al., 2005a). TigerPlace consists of 54 independent apartments and common areas, including two dining rooms, two sports bars, a gym with exercise equipment, an exercise room, a beauty shop, a classroom, a common living room area, a library, a theater, and a veterinary clinic. Residents are encouraged to have pets for companionship (Johnson, Rantz, McKenney, & Cline, 2008), and on-site pet care and support is provided by the MU Research Center for Human-Animal Interaction. Residents furnish their own apartment and are able to make environmental changes to best suit their individual needs. Two meals per day, housekeeping, and transportation services are included in the rent. Americare manages the housing component, and Sinclair Home Care provides the health care services.

Since opening in 2004, TigerPlace has been very successful as a student educational and research site for many of the schools and colleges at MU. All nursing students have clinical experiences in the facility. Social work students complete semester-long field internship experiences. Physical therapy students work with residents routinely along with students from medicine and health management. Engineering students assist with technology research underway in the facility. Researchers from many schools and colleges participate in interdisciplinary research teams focused on developing new technologies and other ways to help older adults age in place. Faculty members from the School of Nursing and College of Engineering have generated nearly \$11 million in grant-funded research.

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