

EXAMPLE 2

KEY INFORMANT REPORT

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APPENDICES

Introduction

A needs assessment to identify important issues facing _____ Hospital and local physicians was carried out using the Key Informant interview and Focus Group interview approaches. Open-ended interviews with 31 key informants and two focus groups, consisting of approximately 30 additional individuals, were conducted the week of _____, 199_, at _____ Hospital in _____, _____.

The key informants and focus group participants represented a good mix of health care providers and consumers. Health care participants included physicians, dentist, optometrist, pharmacist, nursing home administrator, and hospital department heads. Community participants represented a variety of age/sex categories and community sectors, including business, legal services, agriculture, government, economic development, banking, service industry, utilities, education, and religion. Key informants and focus group participants also included a good mix of users and non users of the local hospital and medical staff. The two focus groups were local seniors citizens and hospital department heads. A third focus group with business leaders was scheduled, but only three invitees attended the session. Given the small size of this group, this group 's comments were folded into the key informant section of the report.

Key informant and focus group interviews are useful for identifying key issues from the community's perspective and for obtaining a deeper understanding of community attitudes and perceptions, including minority viewpoints. These assessment techniques are also useful for involving more citizens in hospital problem solving, for raising awareness of hospital issues, and demonstrating to local residents and leaders the hospital's commitment to the community.

In general, the reader should not assume the public at large possesses the same depth of knowledge or as having as informed of an opinion as key informant and focus group participants. Key informant and focus group participants are often opinion leaders who generally become better informed earlier on issues affecting them or their sector. In marketing, they are referred to as "early adopters" whose opinions and views are likely to influence many individuals in their circle or sector of the community.

The first section of the report is a compilation of comments made and issues raised by key informants. Key informants will be referred to as "key informant," "informants," "respondents" or "participants". No attempt is made to prioritize the issues in this section of the report, although relative significance of the issues is reflected in the narrative. The key informant assessment technique is not a survey. The goal is not to quantify. It is a qualitative technique. However, statements like "some of the informants..." or "many of those interviewed..." are used to provide the reader an indication of how broadly certain opinions, comments and values are shared. For this report, "few" represents four to seven informants; "some" represents seven to ten informants, "many" represents 11-15 informants, and "most" represents a majority of informants.

The second section of the report are summaries of the two focus group discussions. These reports include only those issues, comments and viewpoints agreed upon as important by a majority of the group.

The third section contains recommendations for addressing issues raised by the key informant and focus group interviews. The recommendations will make reference to additional or supporting information found in the appendices of this report.

Any questions or comments regarding this report should be addressed to:

1) What do you think are the most important issues facing local health care services?

An overwhelming majority of key informants perceived the inability to recruit and retain qualified physicians as the most serious issue facing the local health care system. Many informants recounted the number and, sometimes, the names of providers who have left _____ over the past several years. But recruitment and retention of providers should be considered two related but, at the same time, separate issues. The turnover rate suggested by the informants indicates the local health care system has a greater problem retaining providers than recruiting them, for _____ Hospital, has been able to attract physicians to the community.

Physician recruitment and retention seems to be the first link in a chain of issues facing the local health care system. Many key informants expressed concern about local residents going to _____ for physician services. This patient out-migration problem was often linked to local medical staff stability. Physician turnover has gradually eroded utilization of local health services by local residents. Local residents leave town for care because they perceive the local medical staff as not offering the choice, timely access, quality, capabilities and/or stability desired by local residents. The out-migration problem is compounded by the fact that a few former _____ physicians who developed a significant local following now practice in _____. Many informants believed a majority of local residents, mostly those with higher incomes and private insurance, see physicians in _____ for their primary care needs. Patient outmigration is also closely linked to a deep concern of many informants -- keeping _____ Hospital open.

The hospital was seen by most as underutilized by local residents, which most attribute to the lack of physicians and outmigration. Nearly all of those interviewed recognized that, for most people, choice of hospital is driven by their physicians, and since many local residents either saw physicians in _____ or local physicians affiliated with a _____ hospital, they are greatly concerned about the hospital's ability to remain viable. Several also expressed concern that welfare reform and changes in Medicare will further threaten the survival of _____ Hospital.

Because of the hospital's perceived financial situation, many expressed concern about _____ Hospital's ability to purchase needed technology and to provide quality care. This concern, which represents the fourth link in a chain of issues described by the informants, was seen by some as exacerbating the patient outmigration problem. If people doubt the abilities of _____ Hospital, they will simply seek care in _____.

The final issue considered very important by several of the informants was local access to care for the elderly, the poor and the uninsured of _____ County. They perceived these groups as having few options for health care services and are very dependent on the local doctors and _____ Hospital for their health care needs. These informants believed the closure of or a reduction of services at _____ Hospital would create a great hardship for these vulnerable population groups.

2) What are your general impressions of _____ Hospital?

Many of those interviewed personally hold a favorable opinion of _____ Hospital, feeling it provides an essential service to the community with reasonable quality. Their opinions mostly have been formed through first hand experience with the hospital as a patient or as a family member or close friend of a patient. However, many of these informants and others believed a significant number in the community hold a less positive opinion of _____ Hospital. The informants reported often hearing _____ Hospital referred to as a “band aid” or “first aid” station capable of handling only the most basic needs. The hospital and medical staff are seen as referring most patients to _____ for care.

This perception of _____ Hospital (and its medical staff) as simply a “shipping point” only serves to encourage more local residents to bypass the local health care system. It was thought to be quite likely that many are going to _____ for care they could receive locally. They seem unaware of the hospital’s and doctors’ full capabilities and, instead, simply assume them to be “limited” or “minimal”. Many informants shared the perception that most users of the hospital are quite satisfied with _____ Hospital, while those most critical have had little if any recent first-hand exposure to the facility, “relying on unsubstantiated rumors.” As one key informant summed up a view shared by several of those interviewed, citing some positive letters to the editor about _____ Hospital in the _____ *Press Reporter*, “Isn’t it funny how negative stuff spreads faster and lasts longer than the positive. There’s a lot more positive out there than negative about the hospital, but no one hears it.”

2a) What do you think of the hospital in terms of quality of care?

Most thought the quality of care provided by _____ Hospital is good to excellent. Some qualified their statements by saying something to the effect of “for a facility this size” or “for basic needs.” Most seemed to have formed their opinion of quality around the style of care provided by hospital staff rather than the hospital’s technical capabilities or staff credentials. Many perceived a large segment of the population holds a negative view of the quality of care provided at _____ Hospital. Several mentioned hearing comments such as “It’s where old folks come to die.” Again, the informants believed the public’s opinion was not formed from first-hand experience with the facility.

2b) What do you think of the hospital in terms of number of services provided?

While many of those interviewed believed the scope of services provided at _____ Hospital was adequate or appropriate to the size and needs of _____ County, most also admitted to not knowing the full capabilities of _____ Hospital or the medical staff. There is a perception that _____ Hospital had provided a greater range of care than provided now because the hospital (and doctors) is perceived as not doing surgeries. An equal number of informants believed the range of services provided by _____ Hospital is

quite limited but few could define what limited meant. Most informants believed the community is probably equally unaware of the services provided at _____ Hospital and by its physicians. Nearly all expressed concern about the perceived number of patients being referred to _____, an issue which feeds the public perception of _____ Hospital and local physicians as having “limited capabilities.” Several of those interviewed were hopeful that the new physicians -- Drs. _____ and _____ will provide a wider range of service and utilize the hospital’s facilities more than by the current local physicians.

Many expressed great appreciation for the hospital’s effort to bring visiting specialists to _____. Some believed this will help discourage patient outmigration, but a few questioned whether the specialists actually use _____ Hospital’s facilities or simply refer patients seen in _____ to _____. Several of the informants thought the visiting specialists office hours in _____ need to be better publicized.

2c) What do you think of the hospital in terms of the hospital staff?

Many described the hospital staff as very caring and attentive to the patients’ needs. Several shared positive first-hand experiences or comments shared to them by others regarding the staff at _____ Hospital. Several thought _____ Hospital offers a much more personalized and caring environment than hospitals in _____. “We’re not a number here. They’re my neighbors and I know they care about me,” as one informant put it. Some perceived the hospital staff as being too large compared to the number of patients served, especially the number of business office or administrative staff. Of note, most of those interviewed seemed to judge hospital utilization solely on inpatient volumes. Finally, there was some concern about the quality of the nursing staff. Several believed that RNs are being replaced by lesser trained LPNs or the ratio of RNs to LPNs seems too low at _____ Hospital.

2d) What do you think of the hospital in terms of its medical staff?

Most believed there are too few physicians in _____, and most thought the community needed two or three additional “quality general practitioners.” Many also believed the community needs and could support a general surgeon. They believed by recruiting quality physicians, many of the problems facing the hospital and local health care system would be resolved. Several noted that some former local physicians were of poor quality, and these informants were concerned whether the hospital does an adequate job of screening physician candidates. These past negative recruitment experiences may raise some initial doubt about the skills of any new physicians recruited to _____, said a few informants.

Most of those interviewed considered either Dr. _____ or a physician in _____ their personal physician. Most believed the scope of care provided by Drs. _____ and _____ to be quite limited. There are mixed feelings whether the scope of care provided by them is based on their capabilities or on the fact they are very busy or overworked. Some believed Dr. _____’s referral patterns are based on his affiliation with _____ in _____.

The informants seemed to base their opinions of the physicians' capabilities on the number of referrals they make to _____. Many thought the physicians make unnecessary referrals. On the other hand, some expressed appreciation for the physicians' willingness to refer out. Most of those interviewed thought both physicians provided good "basic" care, although only a few of these had first hand experience with Dr. _____. Few informants said they would use either physician or _____ Hospital for anything they perceived as serious. Most defined serious as general surgery, a heart problem or cancer. Finally, Dr. _____'s affiliation with _____, his perceived lack of utilization of _____ Hospital and his choice to make his primary residence in _____ concerned many of those interviewed.

Many of the informants were aware that two new physicians have been recruited to the community, and they are guardedly optimistic about the impact these physicians will have on the hospital and community. There is some skepticism around whether or not they will stay. Several mentioned hearing positive statements from friends who have been seen by Dr. _____.

2e) What do you think of the hospital in terms of the facility's physical appearance?

While most thought the facility was clean, well kept and on par with most other rural hospitals, many of the informants also thought the facility looked old and out of date. The exterior was the most cited example. The physical appearance was thought by some as presenting a negative image, especially when comparing it to the modern facilities in _____. There was also many comments about what the informants perceived as the numerous recent changes in the hospital's floor plan. Several likened the frequency in floor plan change at _____ Hospital to Wal-Mart. These changes indicated to them a lack of long-range facility planning. Several also cited the construction then abandonment of the ICU/CCU as example of poor planning on the hospital's part, although they perceived that some former physicians may have pushed this on the hospital.

Some of the informants also believed the hospital has a difficult time keeping its technology up to date or having the technology needed by physicians to practice the full scope of care, although most of these informants could not cite specific examples of outdated technology or technological needs of the physicians.

2f) What do you think of the hospital in terms of its financial health?

While some perceived _____ Hospital as financially stable, most believed the hospital is barely staying afloat, although many thought it is doing better now than in the past. Many are fearful of a hospital closure, which they saw as happening to many rural hospitals. The hospital's perceived current financial status was mostly attributed to the lack of doctors and local doctors who seem to refer most patients to _____. Several also reported hearing about the hospital having to repay Medicare a significant sum of money, which they believed sent the hospital into a financial tailspin. Many have formed their opinion of the hospital's financial status from articles in the _____ *Press Reporter*. Many expressed concern about the hospital's business office practices, specifically patient billing, which was described by these informants as very slow. Several believed _____ is

doing a good job as administrator and partially fault previous management for the hospital's current fiscal problems. Again, most believed the hospital's perceived financial problems will be resolved once additional physicians are recruited to the community. The contract with the _____ to provide health care at the prison and the _____ Hospital Home Health program were seen by most as the two biggest reasons why _____ Hospital has not closed.

3) How important is it that _____ Hospital remain open? Why? How supportive is the community in helping _____ Hospital remain viable? Can and will residents do more to support it if necessary?

Nearly all of the informants said it is very to extremely important that _____ Hospital remain open. The most frequently cited reasons for the hospital remaining open in descending order of mention include: the need for a local source of emergency care, the hospital's impact on local economic development, the hospital's role as a pillar of the community, and the need for local hospital services for the elderly and indigent populations.

Emergency Care -- Informants felt the hospital's ability to provide emergency care is critical to the community because the distance to the next source of medical care, _____, is too great. Most key informants considered the hospital's ability to provide emergency care and to stabilize patients for transfer to _____ as its most valuable and valued function. Several noted that the hazardous nature of the two major local industries -- farming and oil -- demands close proximity to emergency care.

Economic Development -- The hospital was seen as a key contributor to the local economy. With approximately _____ employees, it is one of the largest employers in the county, and the hospital payroll is very important to local business. Many of the informants also noted the hospital plays a key role in attracting and retaining businesses and residents. Several of those involved in local economic development activities said the presence of a hospital has been one of the most important criterion used by business and industry to evaluate whether or not to locate in _____ County. Many said it is doubtful the prison would have been built in _____ County if there was not a hospital in the county.

Community Pillar -- Comments like the following seem to sum up the sentiments of many informants toward the hospital's intangible community role: "Without the hospital, we're less of a community," "It helps define us as a town and keeps us from being like a bedroom community to _____," and "It's a cornerstone or pillar like the schools. The hospital separates us from the small towns."

Elderly and Indigent Residents -- These populations groups were seen as having less ability, for physical or economic reasons, to choose health care providers. Traveling to _____ for health care is considered a hardship for the elderly, and many of the poor are seen as not having the economic means to travel to _____ for care. Many informants also

believed it is unlikely most _____ physicians would accept indigent patients in the same manner they are perceived to be accepted by the local physicians and _____ Hospital.

Most described the community as very supportive of _____ Hospital, but when asked how the community shows this support, most informants were at a loss to provide evidence of this support. Interestingly, only a couple of informants cited county tax support as evidence of community support of the hospital. Many informants recognized the contradiction between their perception of community support and their perception of the community's tendency to seek health care in _____. "They say one thing, I guess, but they're voting with their feet," as one informant put it. Many noted the community wants the hospital "just in case." However, the community may not realize "just in case" does not pay the hospital's bills. Several of those interviewed saw the community as treating the hospital like some public utility that will always be there. In other words, someone (else) will take care of it and keep it open. Most of those interviewed, however, felt quite strongly that the community would step forward through taxes or donations to rescue the hospital if it was faced with closure. "We would never let this hospital close. It's too important." Several mentioned that most community leaders are staunch advocates, if not necessarily users, of _____ Hospital because they understand the hospital's importance to the community. They believed these leaders can quickly rally community support for the hospital if needed.

4) Have you or a family member been a patient of _____ Hospital in the last two years? If given a choice, is _____ Hospital your hospital of first choice? How about the rest of the community? Why?

About one-half of the key informants said they or a family member received care at _____ Hospital in the past two years, and about half of these encounters were visits to the _____ Hospital emergency room. Nearly all were pleased with the style and quality of care they or family members received at _____ Hospital.

A slight majority of those interviewed said _____ Hospital was their hospital of first choice, but most of these individuals qualified their comment by saying it was their first choice for "basic" needs. For anything they perceived as serious, they opt for providers and hospitals in _____. Most informants believed, however, that either _____ or _____ in _____ is the hospital of first choice for many in the community. It is believed the privately insured population and those with middle incomes or better are the most likely to seek hospital care in _____. Several also believed that most local mothers seek hospital obstetrical services in _____ because they perceive the quality of obstetrical care in _____ as much higher. Many informants perceived _____ Hospital as mostly serving the poor, minorities and the elderly of _____ County.

The most commonly cited reasons by key informants for why they and other community members go to _____ for hospital services include (in descending order of number of times mentioned by different informants):

- Physicians control hospital referrals.
- Local physicians, especially Dr. _____, seem to refer most patients to _____.
- Their personal physician is in _____.
- “Bigger is better” in terms of scope of service and quality.
- People have been referred to _____ so often they now overlook _____ Hospital and other local health care services, or “we are conditioned to leave,” as one informant put it.
- Residents perceive _____ Hospital does not provide the service needed.
- Residents perceive _____ Hospital cannot provide the service needed with quality equal to _____.
- _____ physicians are perceived as being of higher quality than local physicians.
- Residents perceive they are in need of specialty care only available in _____.
- Former _____ physicians took many patients with them when they relocated their practice in _____.

5) Regarding those folks who leave the community for health care, where are they going? What do you think can or needs to be done to keep people local for their health care needs?

It was widely believed that people who leave the community for health care go to _____. _____ and _____ were not mentioned as likely destinations. Those who use Dr. _____ are likely to use _____ for hospital services and physicians and allied health care services affiliated with _____. Most of those who have personal physicians in _____ are perceived as using _____ for hospital services and physicians and allied health care services affiliated with that facility. Interestingly, some perceived that a formal organizational relationship exists between _____ Hospital and _____ and/or _____ because (1) the number of referrals made to these facilities by _____ Hospital medical staff members and (2) _____ owns Dr. _____ clinic, and he has been affiliated with _____ Hospital.

Many informants believed the new physicians represent the best chance for increasing local resident utilization of local health care services. Most of the informants have heard _____ Hospital has recruited two new physicians to the community, and they hope these physicians will remain in the community, be loyal to the community and use _____

Hospital to its fullest capabilities. They felt the doctors represent a new start for the hospital and physician services -- a chance to regain the community's trust and confidence in _____ Hospital and local medical care.

Many of those interviewed also believed _____ Hospital must work on improving public knowledge of the hospital's and physicians' capabilities. They believed most do not know what the hospital can provide but simply assume most care cannot be provided by _____ Hospital. They provided several ways on how to increase public awareness of and confidence in hospital services and medical staff services, including -- community involvement in hospital-sponsored projects or efforts, health fairs, promoting specialty clinics, promoting abilities of the hospital, and promoting the abilities and human side of the physicians. Several also felt _____ Hospital must find its niche and promote it instead of trying to compete with the _____ hospitals. They suggest promoting the convenience aspect, the personal, caring environment, or the "neighbor caring for neighbor" atmosphere -- niches, they saw, only _____ Hospital can occupy.

6) What health care services not currently provided locally do think need to be available in the community?

While the key informants generated a long list of services perceived as needed locally, only a few of these services were suggested by a significant portion of those interviewed. Several believed the scope of services available in the community is adequate. Several others felt they were unqualified to answer the question. Most others believed some specialty care provided by visiting specialists is needed. Many felt the community needs and could support a (general) surgeon. Several thought the local health care system needs to strengthen its pediatric care services. There was little agreement as to what other specialties were most needed in _____ County.

7) What health care services that are available locally do you think need improvement?

The informants perceived several areas in the local health care system as in need of improvement:

- Most saw increasing the number of general or family practice physician as the area in need of most improvement.
- Almost half of the informants cited problems with the hospital's billing and claims processing. Most of their complaints related to late billing and some double billing.
- Several perceived the need to improve obstetrical services. They perceived most babies are delivered in _____. These informants also believed there is a related need to bolster local pediatric services.
- Finally, several informants believed the community needs to expand and improve services for the elderly, including improving the quality of care at the local nursing homes.

8) If you would like new services in the community or would like to see improvements in existing services, how could these be paid for? Are taxes a realistic option for helping to operate new services and existing services? How about charitable contributions?

The informants were mostly at a loss when attempting to answer the first question. However, they expressed a wide range of opinions regarding increasing tax support for hospital activities. The informants as a group were mixed about seeking increased tax support for expanding or improving hospital services. Some personally supported the idea of a slight increase, while others were either undecided or adamantly opposed the idea. This mixed view carried over to their perception of the community's attitude toward increasing tax support as well. Some said it would not be impossible to gain community support, but it would be an uphill battle. Others believed, if a hospital expansion or improvement was properly presented to the community, the community would be supportive. Others believed the county is opposed to any increases in taxes and would flatly oppose a proposal to increase tax support for expanding or improving hospital services.

Most informants were quick to point out that regardless of their own or the community attitudes toward increasing tax support for the hospital, they believed most of the county commissioners and the county judge would oppose any proposed increase in tax support for the hospital. On the other hand, if the hospital was faced with closure, most perceived the county leaders and community would approve increasing hospital tax support. Finally, several informants mentioned the option of converting the hospital into a taxing district, but most of these said this should only be attempted as a last resort.

Many of those interviewed considered charitable giving as a possible route for paying for hospital service expansions or improvements. Several commented that such giving is best used for capital needs and does not really help offset operational costs. Some perceived the community as not really charitable, either because residents are approached by many agencies seeking donations or many in the community simply will not or cannot donate money. Several did point out, however, the community has a successful fundraising history. The museum and prison efforts were given as examples. As one informant put it, referring to taxes and donations “If it’s needed and is sold right, this community will come through.” A few thought if the charitable giving strategy is to be pursued, it needs to be highly structured and developed over time, such as developing a hospital foundation.

9) Do you believe there is a need for the following services and would the community support them?

Geriatric psychiatric unit: Roughly half of those interviewed believed there was a need for this type of service in _____ County. Many cited the increasing number of elderly in the county, and this among other elderly services needs to be considered to keep pace with the changing health care needs of the area.

Subacute care: Defined: “Subacute programs serve patients who require care that is less intensive than acute care but more intensive than traditional nursing home care or home health care. It believed that 30-40 percent of patients in medical, surgical or rehabilitation hospital units can in less costly settings such as subacute care units.” Given this definition, a strong majority believed there is a need for this type of service in _____ County. Many saw it as an excellent transition step between hospital acute care and home health care. Others thought it would cut down on the necessity of prematurely placing some elderly in nursing homes.

Nursing home: Most of the informants believed that there was adequate nursing home space, but many felt the quality of the existing nursing homes could be improved.

Alcohol and substance abuse center for low income: Most of the informants said there was a great need for such a service, but many were skeptical whether or not local residents would use it.

Kidney dialysis: Many recognized the hardship endured by local dialysis patients who must travel to _____ for this treatment, and from that perspective there is a local need. However, most questioned whether there would be enough demand to support the cost of such a service.

10) For this question, informants were presented with 15 health care services. Each service title was printed on a 3x5 index card. They were instructed that they were to construct a health care system for _____ County using these cards. The informants

were then told they had ten dollars to spend, and each card would cost them one dollar, so they had to base their decisions based on what they perceived were the most needed services. Once, they selected the ten services they perceived as most needed, they were asked to prioritize these ten. Once they completed this prioritization, they were then asked to prioritize the five services not purchased with their ten dollars.

For planning purposes, a score was assigned to each service based on how the informant ranked each service. The service given the highest priority was assigned 15 points; the second highest 14 points; and so on down to one point for the service receiving the lowest priority. The scores from each informant's prioritized list were then added together to determine each service's total score, creating a prioritized list of health care services based on the entire informant group's perspective. The services and rankings appear below in descending order of priority:

<u>SERVICE</u>	<u>SCORE</u>
Primary Care	299
Emergency Room	297
Acute Care	258
Obstetrical Care	199
Subacute Care	196
Home Health Care	189
Specialty Physician Services	165
Nursing Home	160
Hospital Outpatient Services	149
CT Scan	128
Hospice	108
Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment Center for Low Income	102
Geriatric Psychiatric Unit	92
Kidney Dialysis	91
Other (mixed: ICU, cancer treatment, etc.)	29

The informants' combined service rankings closely resemble what health system analysts and academia call the "hierarchy of health services," which appears below:

1. Emergency Medical Services
2. Public Health (a health system component not included as one of the choices in the informant's prioritization exercise)
3. Primary Care
4. Acute Care
5. Skilled Nursing (nursing homes, swing beds)
6. Secondary outpatient and inpatient
7. Tertiary outpatient and inpatient care

How deep the local health care system goes into this hierarchy is usually driven by the size of the health system's service area population and the non-operating fiscal resources available to the health system. The _____ County health care system reaches into the fifth level in the hierarchy and partially into the sixth level because of the presence of visiting specialists and supporting services for these specialists at _____ Hospital. Based on the comments of the informants, most in the community are not aware of the full range of services available locally and would be quite surprised at the depth and breadth of services (scope of services at each level in the hierarchy) available in the community and through _____ Hospital.

The prioritized list of services generated by the informants is extremely valuable from strategic and financial planning standpoints. For example, such a list provides the _____ Hospital board and administration direction on (1) what new services _____ Hospital may wish to explore more carefully first, (2) what existing services should be preserved and, perhaps, bolstered, and (3) where to first expend limited resources. This list also can help the board and administration determine the "community acceptability" factor when making various scope of service decisions.

Perhaps the biggest surprise in the service rankings generated by the informants was the sub-acute care ranking -- ahead of nursing home, specialty care and home health. This service is currently not provided in the community, but, as mentioned, many saw this service as a step in the hierarchy between hospital acute care and nursing home and home health care. This seems surprising because sub-acute care is a relatively new concept, especially in rural areas, while some services ranked lower by informants are more common and familiar to the average person. The sub-acute care ranking suggests the community would find such a service not only acceptable but logical as well.