

Using Discrete Choice Experiments to Understand Resource Allocation Decisions in the Ontario Home Care Sector

An Overview of Lessons Learnt
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Overview of Research Study

- Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) manage access to publicly funded home care services in Ontario
 - CCAC case managers assess the need and eligibility of all potential clients and develop service plans
- **Study Objective:** To examine the relative importance that case managers place on selected characteristics of **adult long-stay clients** during the allocation of **personal support and homemaking services**

Overview of Presentation

- Highlight advantages and limitations of DCEs through discussion of attribute development
- Challenges in moving from a descriptive to a normative research question

Developing Attributes for the DCE

- Health service allocation decisions are messy
 - Numerous factors considered by home care case managers
- Goal of attribute development: identify 5 to 7 non-correlated attributes
- Literature review not sufficient to identify and prioritize factors
 - Qualitative research techniques should be used

Methods of Attribute Development

- Qualitative analysis of data from case studies of 2 CCACs
 - Urban: 25 interviews; 37 documents
 - Rural: 14 interviews; 27 documents
- Focus experiment on one client type to reduce number of attributes:
 - Could not examine impact of specific medical conditions but focused on functional limitations
 - Excluded clients with cognitive impairment
- Used key informants and a focus group to reduce the number of attributes
- Small pilot study to finalize wording

Attributes Included in the Experiment

Ability of the client to safely bathe him or herself	Safety issues No safety issues
Ability to safely ambulate and transfer without assistance	Safety issues No safety issues
Continence	Continent Incontinent
Difficulty performing instrumental activities of daily living such as housekeeping and laundry	Difficulty No Difficulty
Level of informal support	None / Some / Full
Availability of non-CCAC funded community services	Yes / No
Ability to pay for non-CCAC personal support and homemaking services	Yes / No

Survey: Some Feedback From Respondents

- Time to Complete Survey:
 - 10 questions with a choice between 2 client profiles (Part A – Personal Support; Part B – Homemaking)
 - Pilot test respondents took ~ 15 minutes to answer questions
- Launched as an internet-based survey
- Feedback from survey respondents on the internet-based survey:
 - Two refused to participate because they believed the survey oversimplified the decisions
 - One respondent commented that exercise would be a useful training tool for new case managers

Relative Importance of Attributes

Personal Support

1. Ability to safely bathe
2. Level of informal support
3. Contenance / Ability to safely ambulate
4. Ability to pay for service / Availability of community services

Homemaking

1. Difficulty with housekeeping / Level of informal support
2. Ability to safely bathe
3. Contenance
4. Ability to safely ambulate / Ability to pay for service
5. Availability of community services

Moving from a Descriptive to a Normative Research Question

Descriptive research question

- Example: How do you prioritize potential clients for personal support or homemaking service?
- Target Population: health professionals who make these resource allocation decisions
- Knowledge of Target Population: HIGH
 - Home care case managers make these decisions on a daily basis

Normative Research Question

- Example: How should resource allocation or priority setting decisions be made?
- Target Population: all stakeholders in the decision process
- Knowledge of Target Population: LOW
 - General public may have no knowledge of the factors that impact decisions
 - Cannot be assumed to have stable preferences about attributes considered in the decision
- Question: Can a DCE be used in this circumstance?

Thanks and Acknowledgements

■ Thesis Committee Members:

- Peter Coyte, HPME, University of Toronto
- Jan Barnsley, HPME, University of Toronto
- Deborah Marshall, University of Calgary

■ PhD Funding Sources:



Health Care Settings
and Canadians
Health Services Chair

