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You may have heard recently that in the near future Medicare is going to start rating nursing homes just like hotels are rated, using a four star system. Unfortunately, the media that reported this exciting news failed to point out that extensive information about the quality of nursing homes is already available to the public on line.

If you visit www.medicare.gov/NHCompare, you will find the latest staffing levels, quality measures, health inspection and fire inspection on every Medicare or Medicaid nursing home in the U.S. The health inspection report details the deficiencies cited by the state and federal inspectors. A good nursing home has fewer than seven deficiencies which is the average number in Georgia. An excellent nursing home has 0-2 deficiencies.

In addition to looking at the number of deficiencies, you should examine the nature of the deficiency. Is the facility being cited for failing to give the proper treatment to prevent new bed sores from arising, which is a level 3 violation? How many incidents of this violation have been identified by the survey team? Is the facility failing to follow the resident's care plan, another level 3 violation?

You can also find out information about assisted living facilities in Georgia by visiting www.ors.dhr.state.ga.us. While these reports are not nearly as comprehensive as the nursing home surveys, because the assisted living facilities are not subject to federal Medicare and Medicaid regulations, you can get a flavor for how a facility is operated by reading the Office of Regulatory Services report. Has the facility been cited for accepting residents who need more care than a personal care home is supposed to provide? Is the facility practicing medicine without a license?

Helping your client perform due diligence on these facilities is a valuable service that you can offer very easily by searching these two web sites.

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