

As a senior care leader, what keeps you up at night?

We spend a lot of time with senior care leaders and have heard many stories about the difficulties of delivering the appropriate level of services in an increasing challenging environment. We designed a one-minute online survey to learn what was top of mind for senior leaders about strategic challenges facing their organizations now, in the near term (within two years), and longer term, up to ten years from now.

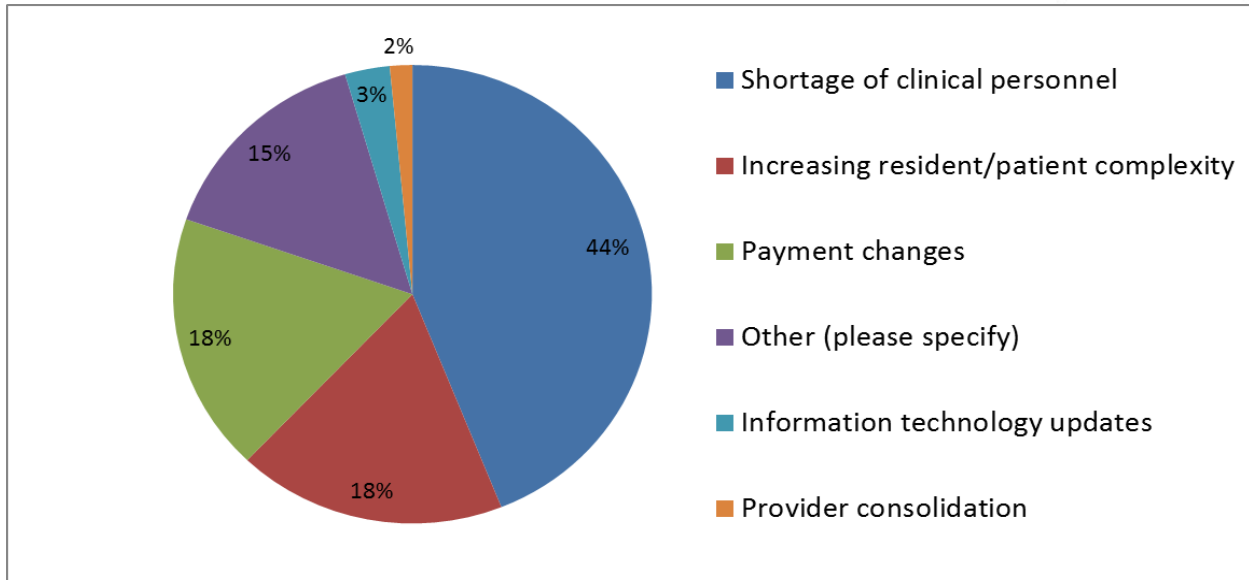
We emailed senior care leaders an invitation to complete the survey. Sixty-six senior leaders responded. Forty-nine of these respondents had C level titles.

The respondents' organizations were:

Answer Choices	Responses
CCRC	40.91%
Independent living	3.03%
Assisted living	9.09%
Skilled nursing/long term care	15.15%
Home care	12.12%
Other (please specify) Responses	19.70%

Our first question was: What is the single biggest challenge keeping you up at night? Shortage of clinical personnel was the biggest concern of 44% of the respondents. Increasing resident/patient complexity and payment changes were cited as the main concern of 18% of the respondents. These three issues accounted for 80% of responses.

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When we looked at the answers of the C level responders only, this group also named the shortage of clinical personnel as the biggest challenge, but payment changes were second at 20% and increasing resident/patient complexity was third at 10%.

What C level senior care leaders see as their biggest challenge

Provider consolidation and information technology updates were the single biggest challenge for only 2% of the respondents. Of the C level respondents, 14.3% responded "Other" when asked about their biggest challenge; responses are summarized below.

<i>As a C level senior care leader, what single challenge keeps you up at night?</i>	
Shortage of clinical personnel	51.0%
Payment changes	20.4%
Other (please specify)	14.3%
Increasing resident/patient complexity	10.2%
Provider consolidation	2.0%
Information technology updates	2.0%
Other responses include:	
Modernizing facilities while maintaining operations	Responses from: CCRC (1)
Recruiting/retaining a qualified workforce	Assisted living (1)
Increasing independent living occupancy	CCRC (2)
Aging facilities and programs	CCRC (1)
Lack of access to healthcare in underpopulated areas.	Home care (1)
Increased workload and responsibilities	Assisted living (1)

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What senior care leaders see as challenges in the near term, within the next two years

When we asked about challenges within the near and long term, respondents could select more than one answer and the vast majority did so. The table below shows the distribution of responses.

<i>As a C level senior care leader, which of these challenges are most important near term (within the next 2 years)?</i>	
Shortage of clinical personnel	31.5%
Payment changes	24.1%
Increasing resident/patient complexity	20.4%
Information technology updates	11.1%
Provider consolidation	7.4%
Other (please specify)	5.6%
Other responses include:	
ACA implications	Responses from: CCRC (1)
Fragmented services and payment for older adults	CCRC (1)
Occupancy	CCRC (1)
Real estate market and home prices	CCRC (1)
Recruiting/retaining a qualified workforce	Assisted living (1)
Referrals	Long term care (1)

What senior care leaders see as challenges in the long term, within the next ten years

The responses for the top three challenges from the C level were virtually identical to the top three percentages for the near term responses in the table above. There was, however, more concern about provider consolidation in the long term than in the short term.

<i>As a C level senior care leader, which of these challenges are most important long term (within the next 10 years)?</i>	
Shortage of clinical personnel	31.5%
Payment changes	24.1%
Increasing resident/patient complexity	22.2%
Provider consolidation	12.0%
Information technology updates	8.3%
Other (please specify)	1.9%

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How does this snapshot of senior leader concerns compare to recently published data?

[A 2014 survey](#) cited these three top concerns of assisted living leaders: rising acuity, staffing and risk reduction. Rising acuity requires more trained clinical staff.

Long Term Care magazine published an [overview of challenges facing senior care](#) in 2015. The six major challenges were: fair payment, expanding services, improving quality, adequate workforce, validating professionalism and increasing connectivity.

[One industry expert predicts three trends for 2016:](#)

1. More provider consolidation
2. Worker shortage worsens
3. More technology to change delivery models

Provider consolidation is barely on the radar screen for our responders now and within the next two years, but given rapid consolidation in other parts of the healthcare industry, this may become a major concern sooner than expected.

Today's biggest challenges look like this:

A word cloud of healthcare challenges. The words are arranged in a vertical stack, with 'Shortage of clinical personnel' being the largest and most prominent. Other words include 'Increasing resident/patient complexity', 'Payment changes', 'Information technology updates', and 'Provider consolidation'.

Increasing resident/patient complexity
Shortage of clinical personnel
Payment changes
Information technology updates
Provider consolidation

We'll see what 2016 brings and how things look next year. With the increasingly fast pace of change in health care, the word cloud then could look more like a thunderhead.

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