



Kali Thomas receives grant from the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality

Kali Thomas, PhD candidate at USF College of Behavioral & Community Sciences' School of Aging Studies, was recently awarded a grant through the Grants for Health Services Research Dissertation Program, funded by the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (AHRQ).

The grant, entitled "Understanding Processes of Care and Patient Safety Outcomes in Nursing Homes: An Examination of Patient Safety Culture, will be used to fund Kali for a year as she works on her dissertation. It will also cover the costs of tuition, data, a computer, and travel for dissemination of research findings.



The safety of residents and resident care are integral to the quality of care provided in nursing homes. Studies have shown that patient safety culture, defined as the outcome of a concerted organizational effort to move towards safety, is poorly developed in nursing homes. Therefore, residents of nursing homes may be at risk of harm. Few studies have examined patient safety in nursing homes despite the growing recognition of the importance in understanding what predicts more favorable levels of patient safety. In particular, evidence is needed to ascertain the role nursing home patient safety culture plays in avoiding adverse resident outcomes. Thomas' study examines the relationships between top management's ratings of nursing home patient safety culture, and objective measures of safe processes of care and resident outcomes. The ultimate goal is to find ways to improve the quality of health care through an understanding of the relationship between a culture focused on safety, care processes, and patient safety outcomes. These first research findings will hopefully contribute to the development of a patient safety culture in nursing homes and promote improvements in health care that can be measured by processes of care and resident outcomes.

"I am really excited about being awarded this grant from the AHRQ and bringing attention to our work at the Florida Policy Exchange center on Aging at USF's School of Aging Studies," states Thomas. "This research is very important to me and I hope that the findings will help to improve the safety of care that older adults receive in nursing homes." Thomas' interest in health-services research stems from personal experiences with family members and family friends as they filtered through our nation's long-term care system. Quality of care - patient safety in particular - holds important personal value as a medical error was partly the cause of her grandfather's failing health while a resident in a nursing home.

Thomas is a PhD candidate in her fourth year of the Aging Studies PhD program at the University of South Florida. She graduated with her BA in Human Development from Eckerd College and received her MA in Gerontology from USF. Thomas is a student member of the Gerontological Society of America, Academy Health, Florida Health Care Association, and the American College of Health Care Administrators. Her current research interests include patient safety in nursing homes, nursing home staffing, and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery in long-term care facilities.