

Hospice Market Research Survey

The Potholm Group

Executive Summary

May, 2005

Introduction

This May, 2005 survey consisted of 400 completed calls of Maine adults. The normal statistical margin of error for a study of this type is plus or minus .049 at the 95th level of confidence.

The Findings

Hospice

1. Maine Hospice has an extremely positive rating.
2. Of all respondents, 68.5% said they had a favorable rating of Hospice, only 3.5% had a negative while 18% were undecided.
 - This is an outstanding portrait and one of which the organization and its leadership should be very proud.
 - Those making over \$46,000 were more likely to know about Hospice and give it high marks. One out of three people making less than \$46,000 did not have an opinion about the organization.
 - All major ethnic groups gave Hospice nearly 70% approval.
 - While college graduates (82% positive) gave Hospice the highest grades, all other education groups came at or near 70% approval.
 - Age was the most important variable as one might expect. Those 18-25 had the highest undecided quotient (48%) while those over 60 had the lowest (11%). By a margin of 83% to 3%, those over 60 gave Hospice a favorable rating.
 - All religious affiliations gave the organization high marks, including 74% of Catholics and 73% of Protestants.
 - Men and women both give it over a 60% approval rating.
3. And of those who were very familiar with Hospice, the positives were 91% compared to only 4.5% who had negative opinions.
4. Of all respondents, 31% said they were familiar with the organization, 36% were not and 33% were unsure.
5. Of those who had used Hospice, less than 1% said they had not received services in a timely manner. 22% had received it within 24 hours, 34% received it within 72 hours and 64% couldn't remember.
6. Of those who had used Hospice, 84% found it to be a positive experience while only 4% found it to be a negative one.
7. Among all respondents, 50% said they would consider asking their family to seek hospice care if they were diagnosed with terminal or life ending illness. Only 5% said NO while 45% were undecided.
8. BUT only 42% said they would know whom to call. 43% said they didn't know and 14% weren't sure.
9. The term "palliative care" is not well known throughout the state. Only 18% said they knew what it meant. 82% either didn't know or were unsure.
10. This finding is something that the end of life care community must recognize and either embark on a huge educational effort or else find a new term. This one is not likely to penetrate the public consciousness on its own.

11. Respondents were also somewhat confused about the components of Hospice. 10% thought it was a volunteer program only, 16% thought it was a medical-nursing program only while 33% thought it was a combination of the two. But 42% did not know the nature of the program.

The Context

1. Respondents were equally divided on the question “I’m more afraid of dying than of death itself.” 34% were, 42% weren’t and 34% weren’t sure.
2. But 97% agreed that: “People should have control over the end of their life.”
3. Again, respondents were quite divided when it came to: “I wouldn’t want to linger in pain but I wouldn’t want to speed up the dying process. If I could have my pain managed, have adequate support and be assured that the costs would be covered, that would be good enough for me.” 31% agree, 43% disagreed and 26% weren’t sure.
4. There was, however, considerable agreement with the notion: “If a person has some control over it, there can be a value in the dying process, bringing closure to life and becoming closer to family and friends.” 69% agreed, only 4% disagreed while 27% were undecided.
5. And most agreed that: “I don’t actually believe I would have much control over the end of my life if I were to die hitched up to machines or on life support.” 80% agreed, 8% disagreed and 12% weren’t sure.

Choice and Dying

1. In terms of the place of dying, 29% would choose their home, 26% would choose in a hospital and 32% weren’t sure.
2. Surprisingly, almost 70% did not believe that end of life care raised financial hardships or did not know. Even allowing for age differences, this is a very high figure.
3. 70% had never cared for someone who was dying.
4. 82% did not expect to be caring for someone who would die in the near future.
5. Only 35% were fearful of dying in pain, 41% were not and 24% weren’t sure.
6. 26% were fearful about dying alone, while 46% were not and 28% weren’t sure.
7. 28% were fearful about dying with unnecessary tubes to keep them living longer, 28% weren’t and 41% weren’t sure.
8. 40% did NOT believe that using a feeding tube was “a heroic measure.” 19% believed and 41% weren’t sure.
9. Only 17% said that Medicare, Medicaid and/or other private health insurance would pay for hospice and end of life care in the home while 12% thought Medicaid would but not Medicare. The rest were confused or didn’t think that it did.
10. This is probably one of the most important finding in the whole study because it indicates that upwards of 70% of the population doesn’t know that they are covered for end of life care!

That finding is particularly important because fully 65% of those surveyed said they would be more likely to use the hospice programs if they knew the costs were covered.

11. 56% of those surveyed said they did not support physician-assisted suicide, 20% did and 23% were undecided.
 - All major ethnic groups in Maine currently oppose physician-assisted suicide, including 60% of Francos, 70% of Irish and 60% of English.
 - Most educational levels also oppose it by margins of 2-1.
 - All income groups oppose assisted suicide.
 - All religious groups except “Other” Protestants oppose it by large margins.
 - Congregationalists, Unitarians, Methodists etc oppose it but by a margin of 43% to 30% with 27% undecided.
 - Those over 60 (81%) were most opposed to assisted suicide, while those under 45 were the least (29%) likely to oppose.
 - Assisted suicide is most strongly opposed (77% to 18%) by those who know about Hospice.
 - Republicans and Democrats both oppose assisted suicide while Independents are divided.
 - Women are much more likely to oppose assisted suicide (67%) than men (44% with 25% saying they are now undecided).
12. 45% said they could name an organization which assisted in matters of death and dying (see soft data Q#35 for specifics), while 55% could not or were undecided. Most put “hospice” somewhere in that name.
13. 55% said they had had a conversation with someone about how they want to die but 45% had not.
14. Only 50% of those surveyed said they had a living will, 50% did not.
15. Only 36% said they had a durable power of attorney for health care. 64% did not.

Authority Figures

1. Doctors remain powerful authority figures when it comes to these issues (100%).
2. Nurses also score well (90%).
3. Religious authority figures do have power for those who believe in their faith (70%).
4. In terms of a hierarchy, 98% would look to the doctor, 41% to the nurse, 35% to a family member, 24% to a social worker, 20% to a hospice volunteer, and 10% to a chaplain, priest or minister.