

MDS Alert

Reader Questions: Use These Strategies to Evaluate Long-Term Memory

Question: How do I evaluate a resident's long-term memory when I don't know the resident that well personally?

Oregon Subscriber



Answer: Understanding a resident's long-term memory status is important, generally, and it's a requirement for the MDS as well, in item C0800 (Long-term Memory OK). Assessing a resident's long-term memory may require some different detective work than you're used to, because you may need to access information beyond the medical record. The RAI Manual suggests starting with conversation. Review keepsakes or other possibly meaningful personal items and ask the resident about them. If you're able to observe the resident's family while they're visiting and gauge the collective responses, you may be able to glean helpful context. (Does the resident recognize their family? Does the family seem surprised by the resident? Does the family "correct" the resident while they're reminiscing?)

If you're looking for information mostly in the medical record, you can ask the resident questions that you can then validate there, like their birthday, whether they're married, their spouse's name, whether they have children and how many.

Obviously, you won't be around a resident at all times, so it's important that this particular assessment is a team effort. Don't forget to talk with direct care staff.