



Innovation,
Applicability and
Transferability

Avoiding hospitalisation by improving understanding of the ways to prevent infections in older people living in residential aged care

Infections are one of the most common reasons why older people who live in residential aged care need to go to hospital. Resthaven has collaborated with Monash University's Centre for Medicine Use and Safety to identify ways to limit risk of infections and avoid unnecessary hospitalisations.

Identifying factors that may contribute to infection related hospitalisation helps to maintain and improve quality of life as well as reduce episodes of hospitalisation which are costly to individuals and communities.

Purpose of the study

Resthaven and Monash University's Centre of Medicine Use and Safety assembled a team of health professionals to comprehensively review infection related hospitalisation events for residents. The team then assessed the root causes of hospitalisations of residents from a number of Resthaven's residential aged care services. The study sought to then develop strategies to minimise both the risk of infection and risk of residents needing to go to hospital because of an infection.

Study findings

Research was led by a team of clinical specialists and informed by consumer representation which involved:

1. A comprehensive review of 49 consecutive infection-related hospitalisations of residents from six of Resthaven's residential homes. This review found that more than half (60%) of all hospitalisations were as a result of respiratory infections, 29% were for urinary infections and 10% for skin infections.
2. Potential root causes of infections and hospitalisations included the fact that some medications taken by residents may increase infection risk and the initial choice of the specific antibiotic used to treat the infection may not be optimal.

The capacity of the residential aged care service to support intravenous antibiotic administration was noted, as were constraints on quick access to external medical diagnostic services such as x-rays and pathology.

3. Importantly, the team then developed prevention strategies across five main areas. These included resident assessment, workforce education and training, equipment and environment, policies and procedures, and communication and coordination.

The strategies were designed with one thing in mind: *maintaining and improving the quality of life for older people.*

What do these findings mean?

1. The research identified strategies that can be put into place to reduce the risk of residents acquiring infections and the subsequent need to go to hospital if an infection occurs.
2. Even though residents may not be able to avoid taking some medications that increase the risk of infection, monitoring for infection in those residents who are taking these medications can assist with early identification and treatment.
3. Involvement in this study provided opportunities for Resthaven to review clinical practice and provide ongoing education to the workforce, including additional learning and guidance resources to improve practice.

4. Resthaven valued the fact that the study highlighted fresh perspectives in this important area of resident wellbeing and has subsequently developed further plans to respond to the infection prevention opportunities identified.

An initial example of action taken is that Resthaven launched access for clinicians to e-Therapeutic Guidelines on its internal intranet. This allows clinicians to easily refer to information about best practice prescribing and best use of initial and ongoing antimicrobial therapy.

Implementing strategies to prevent the risk of residents developing infections is an important requirement of the Aged Care Quality Standards and the study has progressed understanding which contributes to quality aged care services in this area.

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