

Enhancing allied health services for people with dementia in residential aged care: an integrated transdisciplinary model

Complications due to frailty and injury after falls in people with dementia is a significant problem in residential aged care in Australia. A team of allied health clinicians and researchers from the Ageing Research Group at the University of Canberra will implement and evaluate a new allied health intervention service model in a local residential aged care site.

The overall aim of the study is to improve the quality of care for people with dementia transitioning to living in residential aged care by implementing an allied health service to address poor outcomes associated with falls and frailty. This new allied health service delivery model directly addresses four recommendations [37, 38, 61 & 69] of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

Over the next 2 years we will recruit residents across two residential aged care homes in Canberra to be a part of this project at one treatment site and one control site. The allied health interventions will be tailored to the specific needs of each participant as identified during individual case conferences and may include occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech pathology, dietetics, pharmacy and optometry. The project will be implemented through an existing General Practice network in Canberra and use a model of care delivered by allied health assistants under the supervision of an allied health professional.

The specific aims of this project are to:

1. Implement a new model of allied health intervention for people with dementia transitioning into residential aged care.
2. Evaluate the impact on falls, frailty, quality of life, engagement and cost-effectiveness following the implementation of a new intervention model in residential aged care.
3. Evaluate the model by asking key stakeholders (residents, families, care staff and professional staff) about their experiences of participating in and implementing the new model.
4. Produce evidence-informed guidance for residential aged care organisations in Australia to implement a new allied health service.
5. Develop recommendations to support developing and retaining a quality allied health workforce for residential aged care.

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