

Project summary



A good death in residential aged care: optimising the use of medicines to manage symptoms in the end-of-life phase

The *Good Death in Residential Aged Care* project is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing under the *Encouraging Best Practice in Residential Aged Care (EBPRAC)* program.

North East Valley Division of General Practice (NEVDGP), based in the north-east suburbs of Melbourne, is the lead agency for the project. La Trobe University (Faculty of Health Sciences) is the lead partner and evaluator. Other partners are 19 aged care homes in Victoria and South Australia, two Divisions of General Practice in South Australia, local community palliative care services, the National Prescribing Service (NPS), Drug & Therapeutics Information Service (DATIS) and the Department of Human Services Victoria (DHS). In addition, there are a number of consultants to the project including GPs, pharmacists, palliative care physicians, geriatricians, Palliative Care Australia, consumer representatives, and medical deputising (locum) services.

The broad aim of the project is to help align practice with the best evidence available. The project team will work with aged care homes and other stakeholders to optimise the use of medicines to manage common symptoms experienced at the end-of-life - specifically pain, breathing difficulties, agitation, constipation and mouth discomfort. The project is broadly informed by the Australian Palliative Residential Aged Care Project *Guidelines for a Palliative Approach in Residential Aged Care (2006)* and more specifically, *Therapeutic Guidelines: Palliative Care (2005)*.

The project is being conducted in two states - Victoria and South Australia - and is aiming for sustainable improvements that have transferability and applicability across Australia.

The project has three main strategies:

- **Promoting education on the use of medicines to manage symptoms common at the end-of-life for:**
 - Staff in aged care homes
 - GPs
 - Pharmacists
- **Improving clinical support pathways between external palliative care-related services and:**
 - Aged care homes
 - GPs
 - Locums
- **Developing clinical care pathways that involve:**
 - Anticipatory planning eg Liverpool Care Pathway
 - Use of a symptom cycle—symptom recognition, assessment, treatment & monitoring.
 - Ensuring medicine supply across the processes of prescribing, supply & administration

Implementation and evaluation will closely inform each other using an action research approach. This methodology is most likely to deliver effective and useful outcomes from the project.

LEAD AGENCY:
North East Valley Division of General Practice (Vic)

LEAD PARTNER & EVALUATOR:
La Trobe University

PARTNERS: Adelaide North East Division of General Practice (SA), General Practice Network South (SA), Banksia Palliative Care Service, Melbourne Citymission Palliative Care Service, National Prescribing Service (NPS), Drug & Therapeutics Information Service (DATIS), Department of Human Services, Victoria (DHS)

Aged Care Homes (Vic): Assisi Aged Care, Darley House, Fronditha Anesi, Greensborough Private Nursing Home, Melbourne Citymission – Eltham Lodge & Willandra, St Joseph's Nursing Home & Hostel, Regis Heathcliff Manor, Wattle Glen Aged Care Facility

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Aged Care Homes (SA): Alwyndor Aged Care, Elkanah Village – Aldis Nursing Home & Allan Tinsley Hostel, Helping Hand Aged Care Ingle Farm, Helping Hand Carinya, Helping Hand Parafield Gardens

We are aiming to produce:

- Case studies illustrating successes and key learnings including examples of policies, procedures and change management strategies for aged care homes.
- NPS education tools for GPs and the staff of aged care homes.
- Clinical resources for GPs, aged care homes and pharmacists.
- Resources for residents and relatives.
- An assessment tool for aged care homes in end-of-life care.
- Models for establishing strong clinical support networks
- Enhanced skills and confidence for GPs and aged care home staff in the management of symptoms at the end-of-life.

Project participants

Lead Agency: North East Valley Division of General Practice (Vic),

Lead Partner & Evaluator: La Trobe University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Prof Annette Street, Dr Dell Horey & Dr Jeanine Blackford.

Partners

Adelaide North East Division of General Practice (SA)

General Practice Network South (SA)

Banksia Palliative Care Service

Melbourne Citymission Palliative Care Service

National Prescribing Service (NPS)

Drug and Therapeutics Information Service (DATIS)

Department of Human Services, Victoria (DHS)

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Consultants

Dr Brian Le, Consultant Palliative Care Physician

A/Prof Michael Woodward, Director, Aged & Residential Care Department, Austin Health

Dr Jenny Gowan, Gowan & Associates, Reviewing Pharmacist, HMR/RMMR Facilitator

Samson Chan, Supplying Pharmacist, Managing Partner, Mount's Pharmacy,

Dr David Doig, General Practitioner

Dr Janis Mason, General Practitioner

All enquiries welcome to nevdgp@nevdgp.org.au or Clare Chiminello or Diana Cooper t: 03 9496 4333 (Vic); or to Simon Pavelic simon.pavelic@gpns.org.au t: 08 8374 7000 (SA).