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Weekly Care Homes Evidence Digest

Prevention and control of COVID-19 in home care/care homes settings

23rd July 2021

Summary

This weekly digest contains a selection of evidence published in the last 7 days, in relation to the prevention and control of COVID-19 in home care/care home settings. We search a number of Covid-19 review repositories, an existing PHE Covid-19 evidence digest, Ovid Medline and Embase, Social Care Online, medRxiv (pre-print server) and various websites. We select peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed publications (pre-prints), as well as systematic reviews, guidance and evidence summaries.

The digest is produced by PHE [Knowledge and Library Services](#) (KLS), in conjunction with a small editorial team.

We do not accept responsibility for the availability, reliability or content of the items included in this resource and do not necessarily endorse the views expressed within them. Our intent is to highlight early emerging research findings as well as research that has been subject to peer review and wider scrutiny.

This week's digest includes: from the USA, evidence for the use of less invasive diagnostic specimens in screening nursing home residents for SARS-CoV-2, value of sustained targeted campaigns to improve vaccine uptake among residents and staff in nursing homes and in reducing racial disparities, and use of risk stratification to optimise the control of Covid-19 in nursing home settings; from Canada, recommendations for technology to support patient care in care homes learning from the Covid-19 pandemic; from Italy, lessons from Italian nursing homes for future social care policy; from Israel, a risk assessment approach for suicide in older people during the Covid-19 pandemic; and from the International Long-term Care Policy Network, links to a webinar giving an overview of further emerging evidence on the effectiveness of Covid-19 vaccinations among care home populations.

From the UK, lessons from a quality improvement collaborative for care homes; experiences of older people living in areas of multiple deprivation and social exclusion during the Covid-19 pandemic; and a response to the publication of CQC data on notifications of deaths of care home residents with reference to Covid-19 from 10 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. Finally, summaries of other recently published reports, guidance and statistics.

An ongoing series of PHE rapid reviews on a range of Covid-19 related research questions can be also found at <https://phelibrary.koha-ptfs.co.uk/covid19rapidreviews/>.

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Peer-Reviewed Articles

Publication date	Title / URL	Journal / Article type	Digest
14.07.2021	Larger Nursing Home Staff Size Linked To Higher Number Of COVID-19 Cases In 2020	Health Affairs / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authors used detailed staffing data to examine the relationship between a novel measure of staff size (that is, the number of unique employees working daily), conventional measures of staffing quality, and COVID-19 outcomes among Skilled Nursing Facilities in the United States without confirmed COVID-19 cases by June 2020. • Staff size, including staff members not involved in resident care, was strongly associated with SNFs' COVID-19 outcomes, even after facility size was accounted for. Conventional staffing quality measures, including direct care staff-to-resident ratios and skill mix, were not significant predictors of COVID-19 cases or deaths. • Authors suggest reducing the number of unique staff members without decreasing direct care hours, such as by relying on full-time rather than part-time staff, could help prevent outbreaks.
15.07.2021	A Comparison of Less Invasive Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) Diagnostic Specimens in Nursing Home Residents— Arkansas, June–August 2020	Clin. Infect. Dis. / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) testing remains essential for early identification and clinical management of cases. This study compared the diagnostic performance of 3 specimen types for characterizing SARS-CoV-2 in infected nursing home residents. • Anterior nasal swabs (AN), oropharyngeal swabs (OP), and saliva specimens (SA) were collected on the day of enrollment, every 3 days for the first 21 days, and then weekly for 21 days. • AN, OP, and SA were effective methods for repeated testing in this population. More AN than OP were positive by viral culture. SA and OP remained RT-PCR-positive longer than AN, which could lead to unnecessary interventions if RT-PCR detection occurred after viral shedding has likely ceased.
17.07.2021	Rural-Urban Differences in Caregiver Burden Due to the	Gerontol. & Geriatric Med. / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study explored potential associations between changes to caregiver burden (CB) due to the COVID-19 pandemic and rural-urban status

	COVID-19 Pandemic among a National Sample of Informal Caregivers		<p>using a nationally representative sample of 761 informal caregivers across the US.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural informal caregivers were more than twice as likely as urban informal caregivers to report a substantial increase in CB due to COVID-19 • Having a COVID-19 diagnosis was also significantly associated with increased CB. • Understanding and addressing the root causes of rural-urban disparities in CB among informal caregivers is critical to improving caregiver health and maintaining this critical component of the healthcare system.
17.07.2021	“We Should Be at the Back of the Line”: A Frame Analysis of Old Age within the Distribution Order of the COVID Vaccine	The Gerontologist / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study makes frame analysis of 440 online comments on an article published by The New York Times on December 1, 2020 about the U.S. recommendations for distributing the coronavirus vaccine. • Older adults were referenced as belonging to one of three groups: older long-term care residents, older workers, and older adults retired and/or isolating at home. • Two frames emerged from the data as criteria for prioritization: social contribution and vulnerability. • Older commenters themselves frequently stated that they should be deprioritized so that others can be inoculated earlier.
17.07.2021	Trends in emergency department use by older people during the COVID-19 pandemic	Eur. Geriat. Med. / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study aimed examine changing trends in presentation of older people to the emergency department during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to 2018/2019. • On average 4 fewer people aged ≥70 years presented to the ED in the first 6 months of the COVID-19 pandemic (March-August 2020). • There was a 20% reduction in presentations of stroke and cardiac complaints but a 25% increase in falls/injuries following easing of lockdown restrictions. • Authors conclude it is imperative that we consider enabling strategies to ensure older people access unscheduled care in a timely manner when necessary.

<p>17.07.2021</p>	<p>Impact assessment of COVID-19 non-pharmaceutical interventions in long term care facilities in Cyprus: safety improvement strategy</p>	<p>Safety Science / Study</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study seeks to present the first National multimodal quality and safety improvement strategy plan for the Long Term Care Facilities in the Republic of Cyprus. • Based on the initial qualitative assessment the following measures were recommended and adapted nationally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ limiting the use of shared common areas at the nursing home ○ recommendation on the use only of a plain surgical face mask by the staff (especially those who have close and continuous contact with the occupants); ○ also, for the tenants who do not fall under the exceptions to wear mask, were able we recommended the use of a mask especially in commonly shared areas; ○ intensification of educational courses for the staff personnel to promote awareness, preparedness and engagement, outbreak management and best practices ○ knowledge sharing through lessons learnt from other LTCF cases and providing feedback to the LTCF leaders • Preliminary results indicate the importance of designing and implementing multimodal quality and safety strategies in the LTCFs that include regular COVID-19 testing and audits, simultaneously with the promotion of education, communication and engagement culture.
<p>18.07.2021</p>	<p>Technology Recommendations to Support Person-Centered Care in Long-Term Care Homes during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond</p>	<p>J. Aging & Soc. Policy / Commentary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 has exposed persistent inequities in the long-term care sector and brought strict social/physical distancing and public health quarantine guidelines that inadvertently put long-term care residents at risk for social isolation and loneliness. • Virtual communication and technologies have come to the forefront as the primary mode for residents to maintain connections with their loved ones and the outside world; yet many long-term care homes do not have the technological capabilities to support modern day technologies. • There is an urgent need to replace antiquated technological infrastructures to enable person-centered care and prevent potentially irreversible cognitive and psychological declines by ensuring residents are able to maintain important relationships with their family and friends.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The authors provide five technological recommendations to support the ethos of person-centered care in residential long-term care homes during the pandemic and in a post-COVID-19 pandemic world.
19.07.2021	Lessons Learned from Italian Nursing Homes during the COVID-19 Outbreak: A Tale of Long-Term Care Fragility and Policy Failure	Journal of Long-Term Care / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper critically discusses policy implications and policy lessons from COVID-19 management in the Italian LTC sector and aims to highlight strengths and weaknesses of measures promoted to support nursing homes during the pandemic and after, to discuss possible routes for future reforms in Italy and comparable countries. The paper discusses 2020 pandemic events both by presenting administrative data and a policy analysis conducted in 9 out of 21 Italian regions so to assess policy interventions. The paper shows that the intrinsic features of Italian LTC sector played a major role in COVID-19 crisis and new policies enacted in 2020 were insufficient to manage the situation, and possible routes for policy reforms are presented in conclusion
19.07.2021	Who is really at risk? The contribution of death anxiety in suicide risk and loneliness among older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic	Death Studies / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolation and quarantine imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic increased the age-related risk for depression and suicide, but not all older adults endured the same levels of distress. Authors aimed to identify those at higher risk in three age groups recruited through social media. Older adults reported fewer depression symptoms and lower distress levels but greater suicide risk. Death anxiety was found predictive of depression and suicidality, offering an important criterion for assessing who is really at risk among the non-homogeneous group of older adults.
20.07.2021	Racial Disparities in COVID-19 Vaccine Acceptance: Building Trust to Protect Nursing Home Staff & Residents	J. Am. Med. Dir. Assoc. / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes interventions that Genesis HealthCare, one of the largest US long-term care providers, implemented after recognizing mid-way through vaccinations that racial and ethnic disparities existed in vaccine uptake among employees, with Black and Hispanic employees having significantly lower rates of vaccination than their peers. Specifically, Genesis engaged its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee to identify ways to augment its vaccine education campaign to build confidence among employees from minority communities

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns about vaccine safety among Black, Hispanic, and Native American communities are deep-rooted in historical inequalities, marginalization, underrepresentation, and medical mistreatment of these groups To build vaccine confidence, nursing home leaders must listen with empathy, be respectful of experiences, answer questions truthfully, maintain transparency, and communicate clearly in to build trust.
20.07.2021	Proactive risk stratification of nursing homes during the COVID-19 pandemic: optimising resource allocation.	J. Am. Med. Dir. Assoc. / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article uses the example of the COVID-19 pandemic to propose a risk stratification system to ensure timely and appropriate allocation of resources to nursing homes during disaster preparation and management Nursing homes should be risk-stratified according to 20 four domains; risk of intrusion, capability for outbreak containment, failure in organisational capability and, failure in the availability of community and health care supports. Risk stratification should also consider factors such as current levels of community transmission, if applicable, and geographic location of nursing homes and services.

Reports and other publications

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
16.07.2021	A quality improvement collaborative focussed on safety in care homes in the East Midlands: lessons learned and possible models for scale-up	Gordon, A.L.; et al.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Landelijke Prevalentiemeting Zorgkwaliteit (LPZ) is an international benchmarking initiative that uses robust data collection approaches in care homes to identify targets for improvement across multiple European countries. It was used in this study as the basis of a Quality Improvement Collaborative which met three times a year, and used benchmarking data, alongside training in Quality Improvement (QI) and care competencies, to enable care homes to lead and develop their own improvement plans. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the need for more collaborative working between the NHS and care home providers. There is an

			increasingly recognised moral imperative to do more for people with frailty and disability living in care homes. The learning from the LPZ initiative in the East Midlands provides a basis for collaborative working around quality improvement, focussing on avoidable harms, to build resilience in the care home sector that could be scaled up nationally.
17.07.2021	Effect of COVID-19 on Geriatric Medical Services in China	Qingqing, Yin; et al.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This paper analyses the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on geriatric medical care, the prevention and control approaches that can be established, and the challenges these preventative and control measures present for geriatric medical services in China in the future. • In particular this letter proposes the following measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establishment of an independent infectious disease prevention and control infrastructures in geriatric care hospitals ○ Improvements to the community health system network and establishment of a unified network of medical health records and information systems for older patients ○ Upgrade and standardisation of the management of nursing homes, including strengthening staff training and establishing new crisis prevention & control protocols ○ Strengthening of homecare medical services for older individuals, including an initiative of policymakers visiting individuals door-to-door to further improve integration within the community
19.07.2021	Clinical factors related to Covid-19 outcomes in institutionalized older adults: cross-sectional analysis from a cohort in Catalonia	Mas, Miquel Al.; et al.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter reports on a cross-sectional cohort study, to expand and complement an earlier study carried out in the same study population, focusing on SARS CoV-2 infection and its consequences in LTC older residents from an individual level perspective during the first wave of COVID-19 in a cohort under follow-up in Catalonia • Results indicate that the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection was related to contextual epidemiological factors rather than individual factors • In contrast, clinical outcome of death was more influenced by individual-level factors. • Particularly, size of residence and community incidence showed the highest influence on infection acquisition, as has been observed previously

19.07.2021	Video and slides of the webinar: COVID-19, vaccinations and immunity in care homes: emerging evidence from Chile, the UK and Canada, 12th July 2021	International Long-Term Care Policy Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This webinar provided an overview of emerging evidence on the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccinations among care home populations and showcased two studies that are measuring COVID-19 immunity among care home populations in Canada and the UK. • Questions covered included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is the evidence on the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines for people living in care homes? ○ What do we know about the duration of immunity? ○ What are the implications of what we know so far, and what is the evidence we need in order to address the ongoing challenges posed by COVID-19 in care homes?
20.07.2021	“I don't know how many nursing homes will survive 2021”: Financial sustainability during COVID-19	Gadbois, Emily A.; et al.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter reports early findings from the qualitative arm of a large, mixed-methods study: 160 in-depth, semi-structured interviews are being conducted with administrators at 40 Nursing Homes (NHs) across the US • Participants report that occupancy remains below pre-pandemic levels, and enormous expenditures on staffing, testing, PPE, and fines from survey deficiencies continue. • Participants discuss their need for additional supplemental funding due to diminished revenue and increased costs: they struggle to recruit and retain staff in the context of unemployment compensation, and express concern about the high cost of agency staff. • These concerns raise doubts about the sustainability of nursing homes and the industry as a whole as a result of COVID-19.
20.07.2021	COVID-19 and social exclusion: experiences of older people living in areas of multiple deprivation	Philipson, C.; et al.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This study examined the impact of COVID-19 through the experiences of 21 organisations working with older people, and 102 older people aged 50 and over, the majority of whom were interviewed three times during 2020 and early 2021 • The research highlighted the strains affecting friendships, arising from the impact of social distancing. For many participants, digitally included and excluded alike, keeping friendships going during the pandemic was a challenge. • The report emphasises the importance of developing a ‘community-centred’ approach in COVID-19 recovery planning, an essential part of which will be ensuring that the views of older people take centre stage.

Guidance

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
Updated 16.07.2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): admission and care of people in care homes	DHSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to protect care home residents and staff during the coronavirus outbreak.
Updated 16.07.2021	Supported living services during coronavirus (COVID-19)	DHSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance for providers of supported living settings.
Updated 19.07.2021	COVID-19: how to work safely in domiciliary care in England	PHE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A resource for those working in domiciliary care providing information on the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).
Updated 19.07.2021	COVID-19: how to work safely in care homes	PHE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance for those working in care homes providing information on how to work safely during this period of sustained transmission of COVID-19.

Statistics

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
20.07.2021	Number of deaths in care homes notified to the Care Quality Commission, England	ONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provisional counts of deaths in care homes caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) by local authority

20.07.2021	Care home resident deaths registered in England and Wales, provisional	ONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provisional counts of the number of care home resident deaths registered in England and Wales, by region, including deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19), in the latest weeks for which data are available.
20.07.2021	Notifications to Care Inspectorate Wales related to COVID-19 in adult care homes: 1 March 2020 to 14 July 2021	Welsh Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notifications related to COVID-19 in adult care homes during the coronavirus pandemic for 1 March 2020 to 14 July 2021.
21.07.2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): adult care homes - additional data	Scottish Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly data on COVID-19 in adult care homes in Scotland.

Editorials and News

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
19.07.2021	Frontline health and care staff can work rather than self-isolate	DHSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frontline NHS and social care staff can attend work rather than self-isolate with testing mitigations in exceptional circumstances under updated guidance
21.07.2021	"Lest we forget" the care home residents lost through the covid-19 pandemic	Care Provider Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kathy Roberts, Chair of the Care Provider Alliance, responds to the publication of CQC data on notifications of deaths of care home residents with reference to covid-19 from 10 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.