



UK Health Security Agency

Weekly Care Homes Evidence Digest

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

15th October 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 UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Covid-19 evidence digest (including Covid-19 evidence digests produced by Public Health England prior to October 2021), 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 UKHSA [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 USA, a rapid review of social distancing and impacts on social interaction in long-term care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic and recommendations for cost-effective strategies that can be immediately adopted; and an evaluation of pre-vaccine period COVID-19 death risk factors among nursing home residents; from Slovakia, further evidence of factors influencing anxiety and stress among older people during the COVID-19 pandemic; from Spain, clinical features and risk factors for mortality for COVID-19 among hospitalised long-term care residents; and an assessment of the immune responses to COVID-19 vaccination after 6 months in nursing home residents; from Singapore, the value of online interventions in combatting the psychological impacts of social isolation among older people during the COVID-19 pandemic; and from Australia, a national survey of the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of older people and staff in residential care.

From the UK, further evidence of loneliness as a potential modifiable risk factor for mental illness, and a priority for intervention in older adults as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic; a qualitative study of the effects of deconditioning on people with dementia during the COVID-19 pandemic and a call for innovative approaches to address the challenge; and a systematic review of associations between care home ownership and adverse outcomes of COVID-19.

Finally, summaries of other recently published reports, guidance and statistics.

An ongoing series of UKHSA rapid reviews on a range of COVID-19 related research questions can be also found at <https://ukhsalibrary.koha-ptfs.co.uk/covid19rapidreviews/>. A wider range of UKHSA information resources on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic may be found at <https://ukhsalibrary.koha-ptfs.co.uk/coronavirusinformation/>.

Peer-Reviewed Articles

Publication date	Title / URL	Journal / Article type	Digest
06.10.2021	Loneliness in older adult mental health services during the COVID-19 pandemic and before: Associations with disability, functioning and pharmacotherapy	Geriatric Psychiatry / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loneliness is associated with psychiatric morbidity. Restrictions placed on the population during the first COVID-19 lockdown may have disproportionately affected older adults, possibly through increasing loneliness. In conclusion, authors summarise that loneliness is associated with more severe symptoms of affective illness, worse functional problems and increased use of antidepressant medication in older adults. During lockdown loneliness in referrals to MHOA services increased, and was associated with increased risk-taking behaviour.
06.10.2021	Social Distancing vs Social Interaction for Older Adults at Long-Term Care Facilities in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Rapid Review and Synthesis of Action Plans	Journal of Health Care Organization, Provision, and Financing / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This rapid review identified 29 relevant studies and synthesized them into four thematic action plans: technological advancement, remote communication, therapeutic care/stress management, and preventive measures. These thematic action plans and cost-effective strategies can be immediately adopted and used as a resource for all LTCF administrators, healthcare design professionals, and researchers in battling current COVID-19-related issues, and improving social interaction in older adults living in care facilities.
07.10.2021	Deconditioning in people living with dementia during the COVID-19 pandemic: qualitative study from the Promoting Activity, Independence and Stability in Early Dementia (PrAISED) process evaluation	BMC Geriatrics / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twenty-four participants living with dementia, 19 caregivers and 15 therapists took part in this longitudinal phenomenological qualitative study. Two themes were identified: Causes of deconditioning in people living with dementia during the COVID-19 pandemic and effects of deconditioning in people living with dementia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Authors conclude that: Delivering rehabilitation in the same way as before the pandemic might not be feasible or sustainable and innovative approaches must be found. Digital support for this population has shown promising results but remains a challenge.

07.10.2021	Predictors of Anxiety, Stress, and Concern of COVID-19 Infection in Older Adults During the First and the Second Waves of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Slovakia	Gerontology and Geriatric medicine / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six hundred and seven older adults (Sample 1) and 156 older adults (Sample 2) participated in the study during the first and second waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, respectively. The older adults completed a battery of validated instruments for anxiety, stress, concern of COVID-19 infection (outcome variables), satisfaction with health, perceived danger of COVID-19, loneliness, intolerance of uncertainty (IU), optimism, powerlessness, and coping self-efficacy (predictor variables). • The older adults in both samples experienced moderate levels of anxiety, stress, and concern of COVID-19 infection. The greatest amount of variability in anxiety and stress was explained by powerlessness, IU, optimism, and coping self-efficacy.
07.10.2021	Risk factors for COVID-19 deaths among elderly nursing home Medicare beneficiaries in the pre-vaccine period	Journal of Infectious Diseases / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Among 608,251 elderly NH residents, 57,398 (9.4%) died of COVID-related illness April 1 to December 22, 2020. About 46.9% (26,893) of these COVID-19 deaths occurred without prior COVID-19 hospitalizations. • The study concludes: Low NH health inspection ratings and private ownership contributed to COVID-19 death risks. Nearly half of NH COVID-19 deaths occurred without prior COVID-19 hospitalization and older residents were less likely to get hospitalized with COVID-19. No substantial differences were observed by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status for NH COVID-19 deaths.
07.10.2021	COMMENTARY: Quality of Health Care in Nursing Homes	Journal of Infectious Diseases / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The suggestion that there was little or no racial or ethnic disparity in hospitalization or mortality in the Lu et al. article deserves a bit more discussion. It is possible, as the authors point out, that being in a nursing home provides all patients with equal access to care since the decision as to whether to seek care is less influenced by the patient's wishes than by practices of the care facility itself. • The observation that both for profit nursing homes and those with poor health ratings had worse patient outcomes should prompt action. Although the finding that nursing homes with poor quality ratings have worse outcomes seems self-evident, the findings of this study support the need for prompt government action to require improvement by those centers.

07.10.2021	A systematic review of the associations between care home ownership and COVID-19 outbreaks, infections and mortality	Nature Aging / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here we report on the systematic review and quality appraisal of 32 studies across five countries that investigated ownership variation in COVID-19 outcomes among care homes. We show that, although for-profit ownership was not consistently associated with a higher risk of a COVID-19 outbreak, there was evidence that for-profit care homes had higher rates of COVID-19 infections and deaths. • Variation in COVID-19 outcomes is not driven by ownership status alone, and factors related to staffing, provider size and resident characteristics were also linked to poorer outcomes. However, this synthesis finds that for-profit status and care home characteristics associated with for-profit status are linked to exacerbated COVID-19 outcomes.
09.10.2021	Psychological impacts and online interventions of social isolation amongst older adults during COVID-19 pandemic: A scoping review	Journal of Advanced Nursing / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim of this scoping review is to summarise the psychological impacts of social isolation amongst older adults during COVID-19 and review the benefits and limitations of online interventions used to combat social isolation. • Following thematic analysis of 33 studies four themes and eight sub-themes emerged: (1) negative impacts and experiences of older adults during social isolation, (2) adopting coping behaviours in the midst of COVID-19, (3) online interventions to combat the consequences of social isolation, (4) barriers to online intervention.
09.10.2021	Clinical features and risk factors for mortality among long-term care facility residents hospitalized due to COVID-19 in Spain	Journal of Gerontology Series A / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of 6,189 patients ≥ 75 years, 1,185 (19.1%) were LTCF residents and 4,548 (73.5%) were community-dwelling. LTCF residents were older (median: 87.4 vs. 82.1 years), mostly female (61.6% vs. 43.2%), had more severe functional dependence (47.0% vs 7.8%), more comorbidities (Charlson Comorbidity Index: 6 vs 5), had dementia more often (59.1% vs. 14.4%), and had shorter duration of symptoms (median: 3 vs 6 days) than community-dwelling patients (all, $p < .001$). • In-hospital mortality was initially higher among LTCF residents (43.3% vs 39.7%), but lower after adjusting for sex, age, functional dependence, and comorbidities (aOR:0.74,95%CI:0.62-0.87;$p < .001$).

11.10.2021	Fighting the COVID-19 Nursing Home Crisis: The Untold Story of the Nursing Assistants	Journal of the American Geriatrics Society / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the COVID-19 pandemic, nursing home staff, in particular frontline nursing assistants (NAs), played an essential role in the care of residents while witnessing the devastating effects of COVID-19 on vulnerable older adults. • NAs performed this important work against a backdrop of continued uncertainty as well as unforgiving and mostly negative press coverage. To explore their experiences during the pandemic, nine NAs from four different nursing facilities in Massachusetts were interviewed.
11.10.2021	National Survey on the Impact of COVID-19 on the Mental Health of Australian Residential Aged Care Residents and Staff	Clinical Gerontologist / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 288 senior staff of Australian residential aged care facilities (care managers, clinical care coordinators, and lifestyle team leaders; mean age = 52.7 years, SD = 10.3) completed an online survey between 10th September and 31st October 2020. • On average, nearly half of their residents experienced loneliness (41%) and a third experienced anxiety in response to COVID-19 (33%). The most frequently noted contributors to poor mental health among residents were restrictions to recreational outings and watching news coverage relating to COVID-19.

Preprints

Publication Date	Title / URL	Preprint Source	Digest
07.10.2021	Neutralizing antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern elicited by the Comirnaty® COVID-19 vaccine in nursing home residents	MedRxiv	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability of sera to neutralize the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein (S) from Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Epsilon variants of concern (VOCs) relative to the ancestral Wuhan-Hu-1 strain was compared in Comirnaty® COVID-19-vaccinated elderly nursing home residents (n=30) or younger individuals (n=18) and non-vaccinated individuals who recovered from severe COVID-19 (n=19). In all groups, some participants lacked NtAb against one or more VOCs, mainly the Beta variant (15-20%). • In summary, older age, frailty, and concurrence of co-morbidities had no impact on the serum NtAb activity profile against SARS-CoV-2 VOCs.

07.10.2021	Evolution of SARS-CoV-2 immune responses in nursing home residents following full dose of the Comirnaty® COVID-19 vaccine	MedRxiv	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Here, we assessed SARS-CoV-2-Spike (S)-targeted antibody and functional T cell responses at around 6 months after complete vaccination. Authors conclude: Almost all residents displayed detectable SARS-CoV-2-S-reactive antibodies and T cell responses, respectively, by around 6 months after complete vaccination with Comirnaty® COVID-19 vaccine, albeit generally waning in magnitude over time.
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Statistics

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
12.10.2021	Number of deaths in care homes notified to the Care Quality Commission, England	ONS, CQC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provisional counts of deaths in care homes caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) by local authority. Published by the Office for National Statistics and Care Quality Commission.
12.10.2021	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 coronavirus (COVID-19), in the latest weeks for which data are available.
12.10.2021	Notifications to Care Inspectorate Wales related to COVID-19 in adult care homes: 1 March 2020 to 6 October 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 6 October 2021.
13.10.2021	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
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<p>06.10.2021</p>	<p>COVID-19 Crisis Advances Efforts to Reimagine Nursing Homes</p>	<p>Jannifer Abbasi</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pandemic’s wide, devastating swath through US nursing homes had produced more than 1.3 million confirmed cases among residents and staff, according to the US Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The death toll is sobering: SARS-CoV-2 has killed nearly 136 000 nursing home residents—representing about a fifth of US COVID-19 mortality—and more than 2000 workers. • The article contains an edited version of a conversation with Terry Fulmer, PhD, RN, a geriatric nurse practitioner and president of The John A. Hartford Foundation in New York City, a group dedicated to improving older-adult care.
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