



UK Health Security Agency

Weekly Care Homes Evidence Digest

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

11th March 2022

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.

The digest this week includes; from the USA, trends on the use of psychotropic and pain medication in nursing homes and assisted living facilities during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic; and experience of implementing simple interventions to improve communication technology in a nursing home; from Portugal, reflections of staff on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on residential care facilities; and an international overview of the response to supporting older adults, living alone, with activities of daily living during the COVID-19 pandemic and the implications for social protection during crises.

Finally, summaries of other recently published COVID-19 pandemic 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
01.03.2022	Psychotropic and pain medication use in nursing homes and assisted living facilities during COVID-19	J. American Geriatrics Soc. / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An important indicator of how nursing homes and assisted living facilities have adapted to COVID clinically is in how medication use has changed. Prescribing can be an early signal of potentially inappropriate care and/or of a changing patient population. This study focuses on prescribing of select psychotropic and pain medications. • Analyses examined, by month, the proportion of: i) individuals with any use; ii) individuals who initiated use; and iii) newly admitted individuals who initiated use, generally comparing medication use before and after March 2020. • Among nursing home and assisted living residents, overall use of select psychotropic and pain medications was relatively unchanged between our pre- and post-COVID periods, at least based on national averages. • Authors found distinct trends among individuals newly admitted to facilities, with initiation of use increasing after the start of the pandemic among some medication classes: use of antipsychotics and benzodiazepines among newly admitted individuals without prior use of these medications, for instance, rose nearly 30% from April to August 2020. Initiation of short-acting opioids followed a similar pattern. In contrast, it is harder to discern pandemic-related trends for other classes examined.
03.03.2022	Face-To-Face with the Pandemic: Experiences of Staff in Portuguese Residential Care Facilities	Journal of Gerontological Social Work / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The COVID-19 pandemic has placed care facilities for older adults under high pressure. This study aimed to identify the perception of staff in Portuguese Residential Care Facilities for Older Adults about their experience during and right after the first lockdown (March/April 2020) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. • 198 respondents answered an open online questionnaire about their experiences during the pandemic. The main findings suggested three themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A cascade of new needs on top of old problems;

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Working on the razor's edge: a difficult balance between protecting against the virus and maintaining one's well-being; ○ A need for support and appreciation. ● The pandemic has exposed and accentuated the fragilities of Residential Care Facilities in Portugal, which operate with low budgets, and minimum staff. Measures to protect against infection have to be balanced by actions to maintain psychosocial and rehabilitation activities with the residents, to promote their well-being and functional capacity.
04.03.2022	Difficulty and help with activities of daily living among older adults living alone during the COVID-19 pandemic: a multi-country population-based study	BMC Geriatrics / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Older adults who live alone and have difficulties in activities of daily living (ADLs) may have been more vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, little is known about pandemic-related changes in ADL assistance (such as home care, domiciliary care) and its international variation ● Authors analysed data covering 29 countries from three longitudinal cohort studies. ● During COVID-19, 18.4% of older adults living alone reported ADL difficulties (ranging from 8.8% in Switzerland to 29.2% in the USA) and 56.8% of those reporting difficulties received ADL assistance (ranging from 38.7% in the UK to 79.8% in Lithuania) ● This study revealed an unequal (and in some countries, partly needs-mismatched) response from countries to older adults living alone during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings might inform future research about, and policies for, older adults living alone, particularly regarding social protection responses during crises.

Reports and other publications

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
08.03.2022	Communication technology improved staff, resident, and family interactions in a skilled	Vu, Thi; et al.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The authors of this letter implemented simple interventions to increase the amount of communication technology for residents in a nursing home during COVID-19 restrictions.

	nursing home during COVID-19		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The additional technology not only saved staff time, but also increased resident and family engagement. • All staff and residents quickly learned to use the new technology with no major issues, suggesting that resident unfamiliarity with new technology and concerns about adding to staff burden may be small barriers to overcome in implementing communication technology interventions.
--	--	--	---

Guidance

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
04.03.2022	Supported living services during coronavirus (COVID-19)	DHSC; UK HSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance for providers of supported living settings.

Statistics

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
08.03.2022	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.
08.03.2022	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.
08.03.2022	Notifications to Care Inspectorate Wales related to	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 2 March 2022.

	COVID-19 in adult care homes: 1 March 2020 to 2 March 2022		
09.03.2022	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.