

Abstract: “Developing and testing the adaptability and utilisation of care workers as part of an interdisciplinary workforce model of Practice”

Healthworkforce Australia

Brightwater Care Group Inc

Sam Neylon- Author writes:

“Residential Aged Care is challenged with workforce shortages and turnover, rigidity in teamwork models and the absence of client contribution to care.”

The Brightwater project set out to test the effect of raising skills and increasing collaboration between clients, carers, qualified nursing staff and allied health professionals. The introduction of 24 hour postural care was chosen to do this as this was a trusted discipline that had yet to be introduced collaboratively rather than following a top down approach with the clinicians at the top and the carers and clients at the bottom of a “silo”.

The report details the barriers to change and how the team overcame these over a 12 month period. A single high care Residential aged care facility was selected. The facility has 61 residents including people with complex clinical requirements and of the 61, a sample of 8 high care residents with significant movement problems joined the trial. In all 100 staff had to be trained to cover all shift rotations.

The report sets out evaluation methods for levels of skill and participation as well as the impact of the implementation of postural care. Targets are also documented and progress against said targets monitored.

The Results

- 51 out of 57 care workers and therapy assistants attended training and of those 45 (87%) achieved competency.
- The amount of postural care activities shared across staff roles rose from 0% to 80%
- 75% of nursing and allied health professional staff who returned survey data were confident in the knowledge and skill of the care workers in postural care. The remainder were neutral. All reported that they trusted the care workers regarding feedback on postural care. The Care workers also identified 11 additional clients who would benefit from postural care; they had never done this before.
- The 2 clients able to give feedback reported that they were comfortable and happy to continue receiving postural care.
- 3 out of 8 clients (38%) made gains in posture/seating/transfers.

- 7 out of 8 clients (88%) were inferred to have an increase in well being; Further improvements were expected over the medium/long term.
- 4 out of 8 showed improvements in chest symmetry and 5 out of 8 improvements in pelvic symmetry. These results were observed in the clients with the greatest postural problems. 1 moved from a flotation chair to being able to sit in a tilt in space wheelchair another had improved seating posture and a third was better able to complete transfers with a standing hoist. Overall staff reported the group to “look Comfortable and straighter” than the non users. This translates to more efficient workforce outputs with less physical demand on staff.
- All had an opportunity for uninterrupted sleep between 10pm and 5am as turning was found to be unnecessary for this period.
- At the start 5 of the 8 were using dynamic overlays. 4 of these were able to have the overlays removed as a result of Postural Care (\$3000 per overlay).
- Out of the 8, 2 clients were able to participate in their care planning and another client’s family were involved. The other clients were passive.
- Knock on benefits to other clients: Being in possession of greater awareness of postural needs, the Care Workers were observed to be collaborating with Allied Health to deliver Postural Care to those who needed it outside of the study group.