



A Note About These Guidelines:

These are unprecedented times. We are facing situations that we never expected or wanted to. Working together we can make it through with empathy, compassion and sense of service intact.

These guidelines have been assembled based on best practice and current understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we learn more about the specific needs of people dying with COVID-19, these guidelines will be updated, and we welcome your input and experience in helping to keep these as useful and relevant as possible.

Managing palliative care needs in aged residential care during COVID-19 pandemic

Purpose

To provide guidance and recommendations for staff working in aged residential care (ARC) facilities and supporting residents, and their family/whānau, during the COVID 19 pandemic. The residents may be dying because of COVID-19 or dying from other causes while infected with COVID-19.

The COVID 19 pandemic continues to evolve and present a challenges to health care within New Zealand. This document will therefore require regular review as health outcomes and care needs of affected residents, and their family/whānau, are better understood.

These recommendations need to be considered with Ministry of Health (MOH) and District Health Board (DHB) directives.

Please also refer to:

- Ministry of Health resources - <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-health-professionals>
- <https://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/general-information-releases/action-plan-recommendations-independent-review-covid-19-clusters-aged-residential-care-facilities>
- Hospice New Zealand resources for health professionals, which includes items on symptom management, communication, short term care plan - www.hospice.org.nz/covid-19/

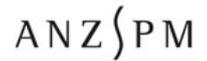
Audience:

- All staff working in aged residential care facilities.
- General practice, primary health services and other generalist health professionals.
- Local hospice services providing specialist palliative care and support.

Key recommendations

1. The ARC facility should have operational policies and procedures that follow MOH recommendations to manage infection control for all residents, visitors, staff and visiting health professionals.
2. Advance care plans or shared goals of care should be recorded and available to support decision making.

the collaboration



3. ARC facilities should work with their GPs, NPs and pharmacies to confirm satisfactory stocks of medications to ensure adequate symptom management. This should include anticipatory medications recommended for end of life care.
4. If a resident is identified as dying, or in their last days of life, careful discussion with the resident, their EPOA, family/whānau and relevant health professionals is important to guide decision making about appropriate place of care. In the event of significant community outbreak, admission to hospital may not be appropriate or advisable and the opportunity to give continuity of care in the person's place of residence should be explored. Advice and support from specialist services should be sought where needed from local palliative care providers.
5. The ARC facility should work closely with the GP/NP and/or the local hospice service to ensure palliative and end-of-life care is available especially if symptom management is complex.
6. ARC facilities and external services should implement remote ways of conducting clinical meetings e.g. Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp.
7. Accurate and up to date communication between the ARC facility and external services must be maintained to ensure safe continuous care. Methods to consider include electronic records, email or fax.
8. ARC facilities may need to be prepared to receive some admissions or residents returning from hospital care. They will need to access current MOH or DHB policy, advice and recommendations for this process - www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-health-professionals/covid-19-health-sector-providers/covid-19-aged-care-providers

Care and support for family/whānau will be important especially if they are unable to visit their loved one. Remote support by social workers and counsellors should be considered.

Some principles of all COVID-19 guidelines produced by the Collaboration:

As with all guidelines, they are designed to support decision making and best practice alongside individual assessment and ongoing reassessment as possible.

No one size fits all, and the guideline recommendations should be tailored to individual circumstances. If local guidelines are available, these guidelines can be used in addition as appropriate. In some instances, these guidelines may not necessarily be appropriate or fitting.

Whilst these guidelines are aimed specifically for people with COVID-19, the principles may also apply to people who are dying of other conditions too during a crisis.

Please do not share these guidelines on social media: the information may be sensitive to the public if not given the appropriate context.

Please feedback with your experience, and what else needs to be added or changed, as we learn more about how best to help people needing palliative care in a COVID-19 pandemic. Please email rachel@hospice.org.nz

Acknowledgement:

British Geriatrics Society. (2020). *Managing the COVID-19 pandemic in care homes*.

Available from: www.bgs.org.uk/resources/covid-19-managing-the-covid-19-pandemic-in-care-homes

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