

Health care planning complexity in supported accommodation

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Aims: The Clinical Governance and Performance Advisory Committee for supported accommodation in a metropolitan region of NSW sought to quantify the demand for Registered Nurse consultation in the development and implementation of individual Health Plans by Key Workers, for residents with Intellectual Disability.

Methodology: Key Workers were interviewed and Health Plans of all residents of government operated group homes in the region were audited by staff recruited and trained for the purpose.

Results: De-identified data were collated on 400 residents, aged 16-80 years. One quarter had active epilepsy, 25% neurological disabilities, and 30% challenging behaviour. Ten per cent were taking multiple psychotropic medications or needed unusual interventions. For 5%, Key Workers indicated that there were challenging difficulties with health care practitioner liaison or with staff/client communication. For 10% it was judged that the client and Key Worker should be seen by an RN for assistance with development of Health Plans. For another 10% it was clear that the Key Workers would like to have the support of an RN to increase their confidence in implementing plans.

Conclusions: There is a small group of Key Workers in supported accommodation who need the advice, support, monitoring or customized training that an RN can provide, to ensure that the health promotion of their complex clients is optimized. There is a large group of clients for whom the quality of care could be improved with systematized training by RNs in personal hygiene care, and in observations related to side effects of common medications.

Sometimes people living in supported accommodation get sick. Some people get sick a lot. The researchers wanted to know if a nurse could help people. They spoke to key workers and looked at reports of about 400 people with disabilities. The researchers thought that 40 people and their key workers should meet with a nurse. They thought another 40 key workers should meet with a nurse to talk about the person they supported. Training with nurses could be very helpful for support workers.