

17 September 2020

Enhancing the access of primary health care in RACFs

North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network's (NWMPHN) role in aged care is three-fold –

1. **improving access to primary care for residents,**
2. **improving the connection between GPs, the facility and hospital services and**
3. **increasing access to mental health supports.**

A new Aged Care Expert Advisory Group has been convened to inform NWMPHN's response to COVID-19 in aged care facilities. The group includes GPs, pharmacists, hospital residential-in-reach representatives, residential aged care facility representatives and the Department of Health.

The focus is on supporting GPs that provide care to residents and enabling access to mental health supports.

The commonwealth has established the Victorian Aged Care Response Centre (VACRC) to improve the coordination of the response across governments and to improve access to health care for residents. NWMPHN are working with this new response centre, Commonwealth (DoH) and State (DHHS) governments and other stakeholders to ensure GPs are provided with the information they need to maintain care for their patients in aged care facilities and that the GP voice is heard by other stakeholders.

NWMPHN's work in aged care is focused around the following key areas:

Key areas	NWMPHN actions
Clinical leadership and advice	Formation of a COVID-19 Aged Care Expert Advisory Group, Chaired by Dr Jagdeesh Dhaliwal
Building strategic relationships and networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic meetings with DoH, DHHS, VACRC • Advocating for improved communication, coordination and processes with GPs and mental health services working in RACFs
Mapping RACF preparedness, response, and recovery plans	Conducting a needs assessment of all 130+ facilities in our region to identify needs, issues and to connect with the GPs that provide care to their residents
Establishing a GP community of practice/peer-learning network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey of GPs to identify those working in aged care and to connect them to a CoP/Network • Providing opportunities for GP education and peer networking – planning a webinar series in conjunction with Vic PHNs to ensure consistent messaging where it applies across the state, and PHN-based learning networks to identify and address local issues
Enabling system coordination	Facilitating joint meetings and case conferences with GPs, RACFs and local hospital in-reach to agree how best to manage COVID
Development of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on a dedicated RACF GP Information hub on the NWMPHN COVID website for information, advice, and links • Maintaining the COVID-19 Aged Residential Care Assessment and Management HealthPathway to support GP management of COVID in facilities • Developing advice/tip sheets to help GPs and RACFs plan for outbreaks • Developing a communications strategy to maximise reach of information to all GPs working in RACFs
Enabling access to mental health supports	Commissioning mental health services for residents and staff of RACFs

About North Western Melbourne PHN

North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network was established by the Australian Government to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services, reduce fragmentation of care and improve health outcomes for everyone, especially for the most vulnerable. Australia is divided into 31 PHNs. NWMPHN is the biggest of Victoria's six primary health networks with a catchment of about 1.7 million people covering highly diverse communities from Melbourne's CBD and inner city to the rapidly growing suburbs in the north and west. Visit our website nwmpnh.org.au

Before you go, also consider subscribing to our [COVID-19 e-bulletins for general practices](#) which will help keep you on top of the rapidly changing situation. If you need further help, email primarycare@nwmpnh.org.au

All the tips sheets for residential aged care facilities are available on the [COVID-19 aged care support page](#) on our website.

We acknowledge the peoples of the Kulin nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which our work in the community takes place. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.



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