

22 September 2020

## Tip sheet 2:

# Preparing for COVID-19 - for residential aged care facility managers

North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN) contacted residential aged care facilities (RACF) in the region to discuss their needs and to identify where and how we might be able to support RACF staff, residents, residents' families, and GPs.

Overwhelmingly RACF managers contacted wanted to share new ideas and practical tips they used in their facilities to help others prepare for COVID-19. NWMPHN also sought advice from Professor Michael Murray, the head of the Australian Government's Victorian Aged Care Response Centre.

## General Practitioners – working together

### TALK to your GPs, Find a LEAD GP



- ✓ Talk to your regular GPs to identify if one GP is willing to take a lead role in the event of an outbreak at your site.  
The lead GP continues to provide onsite visits to take on routine care tasks on behalf of usual GPs while the remaining GPs continue to provide telehealth consults.
- ✓ If you can identify a lead GP, make sure that their name and contact details are documented in your site outbreak management plan and that all visiting GPs are aware of this arrangement.
- ✓ If none of your GPs can take a lead role, then keep all of your GPs informed of what is happening at the site when surge workforce or hospital InReach teams come in to manage residents' acute care.
- ✓ Contact NWMPHN for assistance to coordinate and host clinical meetings between your GPs, senior RACF staff, and members of the hospital InReach team. Ring 9347 1188 to contact NWMPHN.

### LISTS - GP and their residents



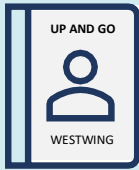

- ✓ Make a list of the residents seen by each GP who visits your site. Store this information in your site outbreak management plan (or "Up and Go" folder – see below).
- ✓ Ensure that you have after hours and email contact details for all GPs.
- ✓ Make sure your GPs have the telephone contact details for their residents who have their own mobile phone and who are able to use it.

### CHECK with GPs and InReach



- ✓ Seek guidance on likely pharmacy needs and clinical management pathways for affected residents with your local hospital InReach team and GPs.

## Planning for new staff managing the site

<p><b>Use an UP AND GO resource</b></p> 	<p>Put together an “Up and Go” resource folder for the site (or each wing on the site) containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A copy of the site outbreak management plan,</li> <li>✓ A copy of the site emergency response plan,</li> <li>✓ A list of current residents with photos of each resident,</li> <li>✓ Residents’ next of kin contact details (including email addresses and mobile phone numbers),</li> <li>✓ Advanced care directives for residents (where applicable),</li> <li>✓ GP contact details, including a list of the residents seen by each GP</li> <li>✓ A “cheat sheet” for accessing the facility software</li> </ul>
<p><b>RECORDS</b></p> 	<p>Ensure that handover records include essential details for each resident e.g. diabetic, insulin dependent.</p>



## Staffing

<p><b>CAPACITY Plan</b></p>	<p>Increase staffing levels (run a COVID roster) to increase capacity on the floor and take pressure off staff.</p>
<p><b>Change to DUTIES</b></p>  	<p>Prepare staff that in addition to wearing PPE and maintaining infection control protocols, they may be required to undertake duties which would usually be performed by others e.g. ward staff may need to deliver meals to residents’ rooms (to minimize the number of potential exposures for each resident).</p> <p>Allow for extra time taken by staff to wash hands and don and doff PPE safely between episodes of resident care.</p> <p>Identify any staff who may be vulnerable to COVID (e.g. due to chronic disease or age) and redeploy them into non-contact roles.</p>
<p><b>FEEDBACK and recognition of effort</b></p>	<p>Observe and give immediate feedback to staff if any lapses are observed in following infection control protocols or wearing PPE.</p>
	<p>Recognise your staffs’ efforts through small tokens of appreciation, acknowledgement, and planning for some unexpected fun for staff. Focus on teamwork.</p>
<p><b>COMMUNICATE</b></p> 	<p>Keep your team updated about the site outbreak management plan. Staff should know what the plan contains, what their role is in the event of an outbreak on site, and when the plan will be activated (what the triggers for activating it are).</p> <p>Keep on providing information to staff about symptoms, testing, PPE, infection control, and changes to routines or rosters.</p> <p>Provide the opportunity for staff to debrief regularly.</p> <p>“Work from your heart as much as from your head”.</p>


## Communicate with residents' families

The importance of regular ongoing communication with families and GPs has been highlighted in the Independent Review of the Newmarch House COVID-19 outbreak.

NWMPHN can help facilitate case conferences between facilities, GPs and hospital in-reach teams to help communication flows and best outcomes for residential aged care clients.

<p><b>UPDATE family and residents' contact details</b></p> 	<p>Ensure that you have up-to-date contacts for residents' families (and preferably have contact details for more than one family member for each resident).</p> <p>Make sure that you have families' email addresses so that you can email them photos and updates during periods of lockdown when they can't visit their family member in person.</p>
	<p>Keep an up to date list of residents' phone numbers for those residents who have their own mobile phones or smartphones.</p>
<p><b>LEAD person for GPs and families</b></p>	<p>Nominate someone who is responsible for keeping families and GPs updated in the event of an outbreak within your facility.</p>
<p><b>DEVELOP Communications Plan and communicate regularly</b></p>	<p>Develop a communications plan so that you know <u>how</u> and <u>how often</u> you will keep families and GPs updated in the event of an outbreak within your facility.</p>
	<p>Keep families updated through weekly newsletters and regular emails (don't wait for an outbreak to start communicating regularly and providing reassurance to families).</p>

## Lessons from the Newmarch House Review

<p><b>STAFF contacts after hours</b></p> 	<p>Make sure that after hours contact numbers for senior staff are recorded in your outbreak management plan. In larger organisations this includes key people such as your Chief Executive Officer and Executive Manager Residential Care.</p>
<p><b>LEAD infection control</b></p>	<p>Appoint an infection control lead or champion for your site.</p>
<p><b>PRACTICE</b></p>	<p>Don't wait for a positive case to occur – run an outbreak scenario with your staff on site to test your outbreak management plan and identify any possible gaps that need to be addressed.</p>

The information in this tip sheet is not exhaustive. The Leading Aged Services [COVID-19 Support page](#) includes a 'Lessons Learned' resource that summarises what has been learned from managing COVID-19 outbreaks in residential aged care facilities. The resource covers the requirements for basic readiness with escalating levels of activity to address different outbreak scenarios. Note that clinical management practices by local Victorian hospitals, health services and GPs may differ from those outlined in this resource as more information becomes available.

## 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](http://nwmpnh.org.au)

Before you go, if you would like to contribute your tips and tricks to help others in residential aged care facilities please contact [primarycare@nwmpnh.org.au](mailto:primarycare@nwmpnh.org.au)

Also consider subscribing to our [COVID-19 e-blasts 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](mailto:primarycare@nwmpnh.org.au)

All the tips sheets for residential aged care facilities are available on the [COVID-19 provider resources 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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