

Aged Care Access Initiative



A GPpartners survey of aged care facility managers two years ago showed that the residents' psychological and oral health were commonly neglected and that these services were difficult to establish due to a lack of adequate remuneration from Medicare and, therefore, a workforce skilled in or willing to take on work in aged care.

Funding provided by the Commonwealth Government under the **Aged Care Access Initiative (ACAI)** provided GPpartners with an opportunity to explore innovative workforce models to address this problem.

ACAI provides funding for clinical care services for residents in aged care that are not currently funded under Medicare or by other government funding.

The program started in 2009, in partnership with Brisbane South Division, and has now helped well over 2,000 residents to access psychological and oral health care.

Student-model provides mental health care

In an approach believed to be a first in Australia, GPpartners worked with four local Universities to develop a placement program for postgraduate psychology students (interns) to provide services in residential aged care facilities (RACFs).

Interns provide an eight week group therapy program and individual time where necessary and assist facility staff with assessment and management plans.

Group sessions explore life and coping skills with residents such as dealing with grief, loneliness, family issues and memory loss.

The students are supported with a structured induction and placement program and clinical supervision which are managed by GPpartners and their University.

The student-model provides a cost effective service with interns providing around 120 hours of face-to-face time

with residents each semester at an average of only \$19 per hour.

In addition to postgraduate students, GPpartners has negotiated with private psychologists to provide sessions where students are unavailable and to assist with orientating interns to the aged care environment.

In two years, residents have benefited from more than 4,000 sessions of therapy.

The success of the psychology placement program has opened up potential for clinical placements in other disciplines including dentists, dieticians and social workers.

Dental care

The ACAI program has also given residents much needed dental health care through partnerships with two mobile dental services.

Private dental services CliniCall and Mobile Dentistry provided around 1,600 bedside oral health assessments and dental management plans for residents of 43 facilities.

Reports provided by the dentists suggest that residents' oral hygiene is poor and rates of decay high.

Assessments continue and dental hygienists are following up assessments providing on-site services to residents who are too frail or too dependent to attend a service outside their facility.

Contact

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