

PRimary health and Aged Care Translation and Interpreting Services (PRACTIS) Project

Summary of findings



BACKGROUND

Effective communication with residents in Residential Aged Care Facilities is key to achieving high quality of care. Residents with limited English proficiency should be able to communicate about their health needs in their own language or use a professional interpreter when bilingual staff are unavailable.

The PRACTIS project was funded by Monash Partners & the Medical Research Futures Fund in 2019 to: a) evaluate any relationship between communication barriers and unplanned emergency department transfers for residents with limited English proficiency and b) explore residents' experiences in communication with staff.

PROJECT FINDINGS

Study 1 – A case control study

- Methods:
 - 2022 residents with limited English proficiency who required an interpreter (cases)
 - 5978 residents born in Australia who were English-speaking (controls)
 - Cases and controls matched on gender and residential facility.
- Findings:
 - No significant difference in hospital admission rates between cases and controls.

Study 2 – Semi-structured interviews

- Methods:
 - 5 residents with limited English proficiency, 8 family member carers, 12 staff members
 - 2 Residential Aged Care Facilities
 - Thematic analysis of key barriers and enablers in communication between residents, staff and family members and impact of communication barriers on residents' health and quality of life.
- Findings:
 - Professional interpreters were only used in legal situations to communicate with residents with limited English proficiency. Staff rely on non-verbal communication (e.g. gestures and body language) and simplified English in most situations. Use of cue cards, bilingual staff and family members was also reported. Staff use different communication strategies and tools in an ad-hoc way.

WHAT THIS MEANS

There was no relationship found between communication barriers and unplanned emergency department transfers for residents with limited English proficiency. Staff use of different communication strategies and tools in an ad-hoc way may impact negatively on the ability of residents with limited English proficiency to communicate their needs effectively. Research is ongoing to devise a framework to assist staff to achieve optimal communication with residents with limited English proficiency.

INVESTIGATORS

Professor Terry Haines, Dr Shiva Vasi, Professor Suresh Sundram, Professor Velandai Srikanth, Dr Joanne Enticott, Dr Jim Hlavac, Rob Macindoe, Dr Katrina Long, Miss Rujuta Nikam. Key collaborators: Associate Professor Christine Phillips, Professor Erwin Loh, Dr Bianca Brijnath, Ms Annette Peart, Robert Hrzic, Professor Kathryn Burrige, Dr Marc Orlando, Dr Louisa Willoughby.