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MEDIA RELEASE

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Pharmacists in residential aged care trial a success

Today the findings into the Pharmacists in Residential Aged Care Facilities trial were launched. The trial demonstrated that having on-site Pharmacists in residential aged care facilities (RACF) improved medicine management quality and safety.

Capital Health Network (CEO) Megan Cahill said over 95% of residents living in aged care facilities have medication-related problems.

“So we commissioned the University of Canberra to undertake a randomised controlled trial where Pharmacists were employed to be on-site part-time for 12 months to conduct medication management. They worked collaboratively with the facilities care teams, other prescribers, allied health professionals, community and hospital pharmacists, alongside the resident and their family,” said Ms Cahill.

University of Canberra's Associate Professor of Pharmacy, Sam Kosari said the trial showed having an on-site Pharmacist resulted in a reduction in residents taking potentially inappropriate medicines.

“We know that about one in five residents have an unplanned hospital admission due to taking a potentially inappropriate medicine. So we were pleased to see that having an on-site Pharmacist conducting medication reviews actually reduced potentially inappropriate medicines. The on-site Pharmacist also assisted in upskilling RACF staff in medication and improved communication within the care team,” said Mr Kosari.

When the trial commenced, 15 out of 25 RACFs in the ACT participated, with a pharmacist being employed by 7 RACFs with the remaining 8 RACFs in a control group. A further 13 facilities were involved in the second phase of the study which looked at broader implementation.

“The trial also demonstrated that an onsite-Pharmacist resulted in a reduction of anticholinergic drug burden which is associated with increased risk of falls, delirium and cognitive decline. We also saw a reduction in the dose of antipsychotic medicines prescribed for residents,” said Mr Kosari.

“Having a Pharmacist on-site has enabled our Registered Nurses to do what they do best, namely providing quality clinical care for residents as the Pharmacist supports the management of medication, including minimising the occurrence and risks associated with polypharmacy,” said Samantha Tosh, Regional Director and Registered Nurse, Southern Cross Care (NSW & ACT).

A key recommendation from the trial includes rolling out the on-site pharmacist model nationally to improve medication management for residents living in residential aged care. The full evaluation report and resources can be found at: chnact.org.au/for-health-professionals/pharmacists-in-residential-aged-care-facilities-study/

CHN commissioned the University of Canberra, through the Australian Government's PHN Program, to run this trial of Pharmacists in RACFs.

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