



Public Health
England

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Weekly Care Homes Evidence Digest

Prevention and control of COVID-19 in home care/care homes settings

18th June 2021

Summary

This weekly digest contains a selection of evidence published in the last 7 days, in relation to the prevention and control of COVID-19 in home care/care home settings. We search a number of Covid-19 review repositories, an existing PHE Covid-19 evidence digest, Ovid Medline and Embase, Social Care Online, medRxiv (pre-print server) and various websites. We select peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed publications (pre-prints), as well as systematic reviews, guidance and evidence summaries.

The digest is produced by PHE **Knowledge and Library Services** (KLS), in conjunction with a small editorial team.

We do not accept responsibility for the availability, reliability or content of the items included in this resource and do not necessarily endorse the views expressed within them. Our intent is to highlight early emerging research findings as well as research that has been subject to peer review and wider scrutiny.

This week's digest includes: a commentary on the international experience of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social isolation and loneliness; a trio of international evidence reviews on, the effect of COVID-19-related lockdowns on diet and physical activity in older adults, frailty as a mortality predictor in older adults with COVID-19, and the consequences of visiting restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. From the UK, a comparison of the epidemiology of COVID-19 care home outbreaks in Northern Ireland during the first and second waves. Finally, summaries of other recently published reports, guidance and statistics.

An ongoing series of PHE rapid reviews on a range of Covid-19 related research questions can be also found at <https://phelibrary.kohapfts.co.uk/covid19rapidreviews/>.

NIHR Applied Research Collaborations are now publishing an increasingly rich range of research outputs on COVID-19 related topics of local and national relevance. The latest newsletter can be seen at [June '21 National NIHR ARC Newsletter \(mailchi.mp\)](#).

Peer-Reviewed Articles

Publication date	Title / URL	Journal / Article type	Digest
10.06.2021	The Impact of COVID-19 and Quarantine on Suicidality in Geriatric Inpatients—A Case Report	J. Geriatric Psych. & Neurology / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health burdens of COVID-19 and associated quarantine can be enormous for the elderly. Being at higher risk for serious illnesses results in them being further isolated at a time of prolonged social distancing. In the following suicide-attempt cases, this paper examines the effects of quarantine and a global pandemic that expose the elderly to increased risk for negative mental health outcomes. • Authors conclude the elderly are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic, with disruption of regular healthcare services, prolonged quarantines, isolation from friends and family, and the incessant and often negative media coverage. • The authors anticipate an increase in the burden of psychological distress and suicidality in geriatric-aged individuals during and following the COVID-19 pandemic
10.06.2021	Palliative Opioids May Be a Bridge to Care for Rural Long-Term Care Facility Residents with Severe COVID-19 Symptoms	Journal of Primary Care & Community Health / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents in Long Term Care Facilities (LTCF) in rural areas of the US may experience delays in obtaining higher levels of medical care due to isolated geography and limited transportation. This study examined the outcomes between residents from a LTCF in West Virginia who were moved to a hospital as compared to those remaining in the facility. • LTCF residents choosing different levels of therapeutic intervention for severe COVID-19 symptoms had no mortality difference. Palliative opioids may be an effective treatment for LTCF residents with severe COVID-19 and also a bridge to care in rural areas with limited resources until more advanced treatments can be accessed.
10.06.2021	The 'loneliness pandemic': implications for gerontological nursing	Brit. J. Nursing / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The COVID-19 pandemic compelled states to limit free movement, in order to protect at-risk and more vulnerable groups, particularly older adults. Due to old age or debilitating chronic diseases, this group is also more vulnerable to loneliness and isolation • This is an especially challenging time for gerontological nursing, but it is also an opportunity for professionals to combat age stereotypes

			reinforced with COVID-19, to urge the measurement of loneliness and social isolation, and to rethink how to further adjust interventions in times of crisis, such as considering technology-mediated interventions in these uncertain times.
11.06.2021	The Lived Experience of Already-Lonely Older Adults During COVID-19	Gerontologist / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative study sought to understand how already lonely older individuals navigated and endured the social isolation of the pandemic through 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with over 65s who scored a 6 or above on the three-item UCLA Loneliness Risk screening tool • Most interviewees used long-standing arrangements, in place to mitigate loneliness and endure social isolation, to manage the social deprivation of COVID-19. As a result, their loneliness did not compound during long bouts of mandated social isolation. • Loneliness during the pandemic appeared to carry a new valence for interviewees, as COVID-19 imbued their isolation with new meaning, rendering their loneliness necessary and responsible.
11.06.2021	Community end-of-life care during COVID-19: Findings of a UK primary care survey	Brit. J. Gen. Pract. Open / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study aims to understand views of UK general practitioners and community nurses providing end-of-life care during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic • Primary healthcare services are playing a critical role in meeting increased need for end-of-life care in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. • They have adapted rapidly, but the significant emotional impact, especially for community nurses, needs addressing alongside rebuilding trusting and supportive team dynamics.
11.06.2021	Virtual support group for family caregivers of elderly people with dementia in the COVID-19 scenery	Cadernos Brasileiros de Terapia Ocupacional / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home care will need updates for this new pandemic context, prioritizing the provision of personalized guidance for family caregivers. This research examines methods to minimise the impact on the mental health of family caregivers of people with dementia through the virtual support group for family caregivers. • The support group in the virtual format proved to be a powerful tool for accessing information and guidance concerning dementia, about family

			care and actions aimed at the caregiver's self-care, with an impact on their emotional state and well-being, minimizing the feeling of social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic.
12.06.2021	Altered Mental Status: An Important but Overlooked Presenting Symptom of COVID-19 in Older Adults	Am. J. Geriatric Psych. / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports on a retrospective single center observational study of admitted patients over 60 with positive COVID-19 tests in which multivariate regression analysis was used to determine if presenting with Altered Mental Status (AMS) was associated with adverse outcomes • 48.0% of patients died and 52% were discharged. 38.2% of patients had AMS on admission, and 58.4% of those that presented with AMS died during hospitalization, vs. 41.5% of those presenting without AMS • While the cause of AMS in the setting of COVID-19 has yet to be determined, its impact on mortality, intubation, and acute kidney injury in the study was significant. • The authors assert AMS should be interpreted as a prognostic indicator of adverse outcomes in older adults
12.06.2021	Clinical presentation and outcomes of COVID-19 in older hospitalised patients assessed by the record-based multidimensional prognostic index, a cross-sectional study	European Geriatric Medicine / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study aimed to describe clinical presentation of COVID-19 among frail and nonfrail older hospitalised patients and evaluate potential association between frailty and clinical course, decision of treatment level with outcomes change in functional capacity and survival • In older patients with COVID-19, it seems that frailty was associated with confusion at admission to hospital. Decision of treatment level about invasive ventilation and cardiopulmonary resuscitation was more prevalent among frail older patients than non-frail. Frail patients experienced more often a decline in physical functional abilities and had a higher risk of short-term mortality than non-frail patients.
12.06.2021	Interest of screening asymptomatic older adults for SARS-CoV-2 in nursing homes	La Presse Médicale Open / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the beginning of the pandemic, COVID-19 affected specifically elderly people aged 70 years and over in whom the mortality rate is high. We may underestimate asymptomatic people or persons with atypical COVID-19 symptoms who may spread the disease. • From April 24th to 27th 2020, mobile teams of nurses from the Hôtel-Dieu Hospital were sent to five Parisian nursing homes to conduct

			<p>SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR screening tests among all asymptomatic residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study included 297 residents: 274 asymptomatic participants (92.3%) were tested for COVID-19, A total of 35 residents (12.8%) were tested positive for COVID-19: 29 women and six men. • The proportion of PCR-positive residents was extremely variable between retirement homes and analysis of COVID-19 positive cases dispersion in each nursing home showed there was no area cluster.
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Preprints

Publication date	Title / URL	Journal / Article type	Digest
08.06.2021	COVID-19 Preparedness and Perceived Safety in 138 Nursing Homes in Southern Portugal: A Cross-sectional Survey-based Study in the Initial Phases of the Pandemic	Preprints.org / Preprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The objective of this study was to assess nursing homes' COVID-19 preparedness in Southern Portugal, including personnel's work experiences during the pandemic. • Outbreak capacity and training were fragile areas among nursing homes' contingency plans. Authors identified compliance with procedures and nonpunitive response to mistakes as fragile areas of safety culture, and teamwork as a strong safety area. • To strengthen how nursing homes cope with upcoming phases of the COVID-19 pandemic or future public health emergencies, nursing homes' preparedness and safety culture should be fostered and closely monitored.
09.06.2021	Pooling Samples as an Efficient Approach to Regular SARS-CoV-2 Testing in Residential Care Facilities	Lancet Preprints / Preprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Hong Kong, care home staff are required to undergo testing for SARS-CoV-2 every two weeks, regardless of symptoms. This paper aimed to optimize testing strategies in order to improve on existing screening programs. • Authors estimated the reduced sensitivity of pooled PCR testing and used a decision analysis to determine the expected number of tests required.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assuming a prevalence of 0.02%, pooling 10 samples and conducting testing every two days instead of testing without pooling every 14 days could reduce the average size of an outbreak from between 2 and 14 cases (median 7 cases) to between 1 and 6 cases (median 2 cases). Pooling to allow for daily testing further reduced the average size of an outbreak from 4 cases to 1 case compared to weekly testing. Health authorities can improve on existing screening programs by employing pooled testing procedures and testing individuals more frequently to make the most use of available testing resources.
14.06.2021	Impact of long-term care facility size on preparedness and adherence to infection prevention and control guidance for the mitigation of COVID-19	MedRxiv / Preprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper aims to evaluate preparedness and adherence of Brazilian long-term care facilities (LTCFs) to the World Health Organization (WHO) infection prevention and control (IPC) guidance, and examines association of LTCF size with adherence Preparedness for mitigating COVID-19 in Brazilian LTCFs was considered excellent for most of the proposed recommendations, regardless of LTCF size. Difficulties and problems with infrastructure and/or resident care were much less commonly reported than those related to maintenance of a sufficient stock of materials, workforce management, and financial distress.

Reports and other publications

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
08.06.2021	Utilization of transfer support equipment for meeting with family members in a nursing home during the COVID-19 pandemic: A case report	Yoshimi, Tatsuya; et al.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case Report is based on a facility survey at 1 month after the introduction of a “Resyone Plus”, which is used as transfer support equipment and has an ISO 13482 safety certification The advantage of the Resyone is that a single caregiver can move the care recipient, reducing the burden of caregiving. Above all, in the facility we examined, the caregivers reported that the care recipient became more expressive and began to smile as a result of the expansion of his living space.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This improvement in the quality of life of care recipients is considered to be a good example of the benefit of introducing such types of nursing care equipment.
11.06.2021	A comparison of the epidemiology of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreaks occurring in the first and second waves in care homes in Northern Ireland	Lavery, Siobhan; et al.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter describes and compares the epidemiology of COVID-19 outbreaks occurring in the first and second waves in care homes in Northern Ireland. A significantly larger number of outbreaks were recorded in the second wave. In both waves the proportion of total care homes reporting outbreaks was substantially skewed towards nursing homes. Additionally, more care homes reported experiencing multiple outbreaks in the second wave.

Guidance

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
Updated 08.06.2021	Visiting in nursing homes and other residential care facilities during COVID-19 Information for Residents and Visitors	Health Protection Surveillance Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives information for residential carehome residents and visitors about enjoying visits in a way that keeps the risk of COVID-19 as low as possible
08.06.2021	Guidance on reopening of day services for older people in context of COVID 19 vaccination programme	Health Protection Surveillance Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reopening of key services that support older people is now being examined. Loss of access to these services has had a very significant impact on the health and wellbeing of older people. Vaccination has changed the balance of risk and benefit associated with access to these services so that resumption of these services is now appropriate. This advice specifically refers to those day centre services provided through HSE or associated Section 38 services but may be used by others providing similar services

16.06.2021	Making vaccination a condition of deployment in older adult care homes	DHSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation outcome. Older adults living in care homes have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic because of their heightened risk to COVID-19 infection, often with devastating consequences, as well as the risk of outbreaks in these closed settings. • Ensuring very high levels of vaccination of people living and working in these settings is an essential public health intervention. • The government hosted a public consultation from 14 April 2021 to 26 May 2021 on a proposal to make COVID-19 vaccination a condition of employment in care homes with older adults. This is the formal government response to that consultation. • Following the consultation, the policy now applies to all care homes.
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Evidence Summaries

Publication Date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
08.06.2021	The Effect of COVID-19-related Lockdowns on Diet and Physical Activity in Older Adults: A Systematic Review	Larson, Elisabeth Anne ; Bader-Larsen, Karlen Stade; Magkos, Faidon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim of this systematic review was to evaluate evidence for changes in the diet and physical activity habits of older adults due to COVID-19–related lockdowns. • Safer-at-home measures have not greatly impacted the diet of older adults but have led to a significant decrease in their physical activity, putting them at higher risk for non-communicable diseases, which may further increase their susceptibility to COVID-19. • Findings may help guide clinical practice, by promoting additional health screenings by general practitioners for the elderly and by emphasizing the need for lifestyle interventions like at-home exercise initiatives, to help mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on this especially vulnerable age group.

12.06.2021	Frailty as a Mortality Predictor in Older adults with COVID-19: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Cohort Studies: Frailty among older adults with COVID-19	Saragih, Ita Daryanti; et al.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper aimed to systematically identify the impact of frailty on overall mortality among older adults with COVID-19 • A systematic review of the literature indexed in 4 databases identified 22 studies that met our inclusion criteria, including 924,520 total patients. • Overall, frailty among older adults was associated with high rates of COVID-19-related mortality compared with non-frail older adults • The results show physical limitations, such as those associated with frailty among older adults, are associated with higher rates of COVID-19-related mortality.
12.06.2021	Consequences of Visiting restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic: An integrative review	Hugelius, Karin; et al.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the COVID-19 pandemic, visiting restrictions of different extents have been implemented. However, despite the long history of visiting restrictions in health care systems, little is known about their effects. • This review sought to explore the consequences of visitor restrictions in health care services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Papers covering palliative care and nursing home settings were included, along with papers related to intensive care, paediatric care, general medical care, and hospital care settings. • Although appreciation for the technical solutions enabling remote meetings was reported, visiting restrictions had several consequences, mainly negative, for the patient's health, the health and wellbeing of family members and the provision of care. • Physical health consequences for patients included: reduced nutrition intake, decreased activities of daily living and increased physical pain and symptoms were reported. • Mental health consequences for patients included: loneliness, depressive symptoms, agitation, aggression, reduced cognitive ability and overall dissatisfaction were observed • For family members, worry, anxiety and uncertainty occurred, and they reported an increased need for information from care providers. • When implementing visiting restrictions in health care services, decision makers and nurses need to be aware of their potential negative effects and adapt the provision of care to compensate for

			<p>such effects. Nurses in all sectors should be aware that visiting restrictions may affect patients, families, and health care services for longer than the actual pandemic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the level of evidence regarding effect from visiting restrictions is low, further studies is strongly needed.
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Statistics

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
15.06.2021	Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional	ONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisional counts of the number of deaths registered in England and Wales, by age, sex and region, in the latest weeks for which data are available. Includes the most up-to-date figures available for deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19).
15.06.2021	Number of deaths in care homes notified to the Care Quality Commission, England	ONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly updated provisional counts of deaths caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) by local authority
16.06.2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): adult care homes - additional data	Scottish Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly data on COVID-19 in adult care homes in Scotland.

Editorials and News

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
10.06.2021	Put 'nursing' back into aged care: Nursing care is essential to aged care homes beyond the COVID-19 pandemic	Usher, Kim; Hickman, Louise D.; Jackson, Debra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Editorial notes that COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates value and urgent need for registered nurses to be a strong presence in aged care homes where ratios are constantly • The knowledge and skills of registered nurses cannot be replicated by unregulated personnel.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Argues nursing profession must act to generate the knowledge required to argue for a stronger presence of nursing within residential aged care homes.
16.06.2021	Everyone working in care homes to be fully vaccinated under new law to protect residents	DHSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People working in CQC-registered care homes will need to be fully COVID-19 vaccinated with both doses. This decision follows an extensive public consultation with thousands of staff, providers, residents and families Further consultation will be launched on whether to extend to other health and social care settings