

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Written Question received 21 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000522

Infection control and PPE procedures

Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

Is National Cabinet considering endorsing infection control and PPE procedures for aged care facilities and home care services across Australia?

Answer:

Early in the pandemic, the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee adopted and implemented the *CDNA National Guidelines for the Prevention, Control and Public Health Management of COVID-19 Outbreaks in Residential Care Facilities in Australia* (initial release 13 March 2020) and the *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guide for Home Care Providers* (initial release 2 April 2020). This included guidance around infection prevention and control and PPE requirements.

On 21 August 2020, the National Cabinet endorsed the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee's *Guide to the Establishment of an Aged Care Health Emergency Response Operations Centre* in each jurisdiction, and committed to:

- Ongoing assessment of the preparedness of aged care providers.
- Auditing of state and territory emergency response capabilities and planning for the standing up of joint health aged care emergency responses.
- Prioritisation of additional face to face infection prevention and control training for residential aged care providers.

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Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Written Question received 21 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000534

Chemical restraints on aged care residents with COVID-19:

Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

What medical advice is Australia, or are other countries, developing around the use of chemical restraints on aged care residents with covid-19? For example, we know that the use of antipsychotic drugs already increase the risk of death in older people with dementia - are these drugs contributing to a person's risk of death from covid-19?

Answer:

Research on the subject is limited. There is a recently published evidence review on antipsychotics in BMC Medicine, 'Safety of psychotropic medications in people with COVID-19: evidence review and practical recommendations', available at: <https://bmcmmedicine.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12916-020-01685-9> – however, it is not specific to aged care recipients. The evidence review outlined that all classes of psychotropic medications showed potentially relevant safety risks for people with COVID-19 and outlines a set of practical recommendations.

Dementia Support Australia has been supporting behaviour management in COVID-19 affected services and has published a help sheet¹, which specifically addresses chemical and physical restraint use during a COVID-19 outbreak.

While behavioural challenges may be exacerbated by restrictions and visitor limitations in residential aged care services, physical and chemical restraint should continue to be used only as a last resort regardless of a positive COVID-19 diagnosis.

¹ Dementia Support Australia, 2020. Available at: www.dementia.com.au/downloads/dementia/Resources-Library/Helpsheets/Managing-behaviours-during-a-pandemic.pdf