



AUSTRALIAN Ageing Agenda

Research shines spotlight on best practice implementation

By **Megan Stoyles** on [December 13, 2017](#) in **Industry, Research & Clinical**

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An Australian-first study will investigate how much evidence-based care is being delivered to aged care residents.

A team of six experts from five universities across three states will undertake the four-year project known as CareTrack Aged.

The National Health and Medical Research Council funded project aims to determine the proportion of care delivered in residential aged care facilities that is in line with best practice guidelines.

While people may provide anecdotal evidence of problems in aged care facilities, it is important to systematically monitor, measure and investigate the level of evidence-based care provided, said Professor Jeffrey Braithwaite, the chief investigator of the study.

“We know care that follows best practice guidelines plays a critical role in people’s health and wellbeing and by investigating this for aged care, we will be able to identify opportunities for improvement,” said Professor Braithwaite, who is founding director of the Australian Institute of Health Innovation at Macquarie University.

To date, very little research has been done to identify if the care being delivered is in line with best practice and if the social wellbeing needs of residents are being met, he said.

The study will also have important implications for the aged care workforce, Professor Braithwaite said.

“By identifying what really works well in residential aged care facilities, we can provide strategies that will lead to a more sustainable workforce.”

The research will look at 15 conditions frequently managed in residential aged care facilities including delirium, dementia, depression, pain management and medication management.

CareTrack Aged will also assess the quality of life of residents, encompassing concepts that relate to older peoples’ attachments such as love and friendship, security, enjoyment and control.

It will form part of the greater CareTrack research project which has previously investigated where evidence-based healthcare excelled, and where it performed poorly, so that improvements could be carefully targeted to where they were most needed.

Professor Len Gray, who is from the University of Queensland and a veteran in reporting on aged care, is one of the chief investigators on the project.

“This research hasn’t been attempted before in aged care, so let’s see how it goes,” he told AAA.

He will also be co-ordinating recruitment of Queensland facilities.

“Facilities need to sign up and that may be a challenge,” he added.

Project leaders however are optimistic about facility support in the project and encouraged participation.

“The project will not burden the residential aged care facility provider as we will use trained external surveyors,” Professor Braithwaite told AAA.

The ideal number of participating facilities will be determined after further consultation among the chief investigators and recruitment is expected to start in 2018, he said.

Chief investigators

- Professor Jeffrey Braithwaite, Macquarie University: a world recognised leader in health systems research
- Professor Ian Cameron, Sydney University: academic geriatrician with a special interest in disability, health and rehabilitation in older people, especially regarding hip fracture and dementia
- Professor Alison Kitson, University of Adelaide: world renowned translational health scientist and nursing leader on ways to close the knowledge to practice gap in healthcare
- Professor Richard Reed, Flinders University: a GP and clinician researcher on chronic disease management and complex multi-morbidity care coordination and medical services in residential aged care facilities
- Professor Andrew Georgiou, Macquarie University: an expert on the design of information technology systems across aged care settings and in the design, testing and implementation of reviewing resident records and collecting quality of life data.
- Professor Len Gray University of Queensland: a senior geriatrician with extensive experience in both administering and working as a clinician in residential aged care facilities, with considerable expertise around expected clinical standards.

Peter Hibbert from Macquarie University, who is an expert in incident reporting, patient safety and appropriateness of care, will manage the project alongside Professor Braithwaite.

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