

Intercare Corporate Group Inc.
501-5920 Macleod Trail SW
Calgary, AB
T2H 0K2
Tel: (403) 255-4969
Fax: (403) 252-6591
www.intercarealberta.com

Email questions or feedback to:
feedback@intercarealberta.com

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Intercare Corporate Group Inc. - "The Heart of Excellence"



Supporting Sexual Health and Intimacy in Long-Term Care Homes

Sexual health and intimacy are essential components of overall health and well-being. Sexual expression is an important consideration in maintaining quality of life for residents who are living in continuing care settings, including long-term care. Moving into a long-term care home should not, in and of itself, equate to losing the opportunity to express autonomy in sexual expression. Long-term care homes have an obligation to recognize, respect and support residents' sexual expression, while at the same time ensuring safety and security for them and those around them.

Resident Autonomy

In studies, residents indicate that retaining autonomy through personal choices is a very important component of their sexual expression. This includes making decisions about what to wear, how one's hair is styled, which social activities one participates in and so forth. In making these choices, it is not solely about maintaining one's identity; it is also about the feeling of empowerment that comes with being able to make choices for one's self. In other words, rather than solely being acted upon, residents express a desire to act within their worlds. Being able to make choices for themselves means being able to pursue possibilities.

Supporting Resident Values

- * Sexuality is an integral part of the lives of all people and is a normal part of the lives of individuals living in continuing care settings, including long-term care homes.
- * Sexual desire exists across the lifespan.
- * All persons are sexual beings and should be treated with respect, concerning sexual health and sexual expression, irrespective of their age, sex, race or ethnic origin, disability, cognitive capacity, marital or family status, beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or socioeconomic status.
- * Feelings and capacity for sexual expression may continue, even with the most significantly impaired individuals.
- * Individuals require a safe environment for sexual expression.
- * Individuals have the right to make choices, as circumscribed by law and ethics, which caregivers may not agree with or feel willing or able to support.
- * Dealing with residents' (i.e. those who are living in a long-term care homes) sexual expression should be respectful and caring and should not include revulsion, disdain, contempt, mockery or punishment towards the individual.
- * Individual freedoms are to be preserved, as much as possible, in care settings (e.g. long-term care).

Sexuality...

- * Is a central aspect of being human throughout life.
- * Encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction.
- * Is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships.

While sexuality can include all of the above dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed; sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors. (World Health Organization, 2020, my emphasis)

Resources Available

<https://www.sexualexpressionincare.com/reports>

* Sexual Expression in Alberta's Continuing Care Homes *Perspectives from Managers and Leaders*

* Sexual Expression in Alberta's Continuing Care Homes *Perspectives from Residents and Family Members*

<https://vch.eduhealth.ca/en/permalink/phem4152>



Quality improvement projects allow clinicians, working within a team, to identify an issue and implement interventions that can result in true improvements in quality. Intercare's Directors of Care (DOCs) and Clinical Team Leaders (CTLs) lead quality improvement projects at their respective sites, based upon resident needs at each of the sites. This Newsletter will highlight and detail those projects.

Brentwood Care Centre Quality Projects

Long Term Care

The Quality Project at Brentwood Care Centre in long term care is focused on decreasing the overall percentage of residents on Chemical Restraint medication by 5% over the next 6 months and 15% over the next 12 months. This project includes the following strategies:

- Meetings with Case Managers & Clinical Pharmacist will review residents who are on a Chemical Restraint medication.
- Reduction in a resident's chemical restraints medication dosage will be undertaken with the Physician's and family's consents, where able.
- Use of 'behavior mapping' to review and identify alternative approaches that can be used to address resident behavior, with the help of Educators and Case Managers.

Behavioral Support Unit (BSU)

The Quality Project on the BSU at the Brentwood Care Centre is focused on developing personal skills and techniques to help bolster staff's coping skills, enhance their work enjoyment and decrease the occurrence of sick calls by 10% in a year. This project includes the following strategies:

- Listening to staff (e.g. what is it that they are missing and what can Team Leaders do to help).
- Building up staff's understanding and knowledge about emotional intelligence, self awareness and self reflection.
- Posting words of encouragement in the staff room each month.
- Meeting with staff individually, on a quarterly basis, to talk about progress and goals moving forward.
- Celebrating monthly with potlucks, draws and games.

Chinook Care Centre Quality Projects

Long Term Care

The Quality Project at Chinook Care Centre in long term care is focused on the treatment of chronic wounds. These types of wounds have a huge impact in the quality of life of the elderly. Based upon assessments and site indicators, an increase in the number of Stage 2 pressure ulcers was noted in the last quarter of 2023. In response, the effectiveness of an alternate wound product's clinical effectiveness and possible impact to residents is being evaluated. This project includes the following strategies:

- In January 2024, TRIAD (which was considered the #1 product used to manage Stage 2 pressure ulcers) was replaced with Nano Salv.
- Stage 2 Skin tears which were being managed by Biatin Silicone lite, Mepitel and prescription cream to manage infection are being replaced with Nano Salv and Biatin Silicone only.
- Cancer wounds being managed by ABD pad and Mefix are being replaced with Nano Salv to manage discharges.
- Vascular wounds being managed with different types of dressings to manage discharge are being replaced with Nano Salv and Biatin Silicone.

Complex Dementia Unit (CDC)

The Quality Project on the CDC unit at the Chinook Care Centre is focused on achieving a reduction in the number of pressure-related injuries. Pressure injuries are sores (ulcers) that happen on areas of the skin that are under pressure. On the CDC unit, some of the pressure-related injuries coincide with a decline in residents' physical health and nutrition-related to disease progression; others are due to impaired cognition and responsive behaviours that create challenges with implementing and maintaining interventions. The project includes the following strategies:

- Early recognition and identification of risks for pressure injuries and early management.
- Consistency in applying interventions to mitigate risks of pressure injuries and application of intervention to mitigate risks before they begin.
- Improvement in reporting and documentation of skin observations.
- Staff education.
- Use of Palliative Performance Scale (PPS) during admission and with significant change in status, as decline directly correlates with increased risks of pressure-related injuries.
- Development of signage / visual aids to prompt staff in repositioning and offloading.

Chinook Hospice

The Quality Project at Chinook Hospice is focused on achieving optimal symptom control, as well as the best emotional and overall well-being for Hospice patients. The project includes the following strategies:

- Increasing the frequency of Hospice patient being visited by volunteers, staff and family members and pets, including Pet Access League Society (PALS).
- Offering extra external resources to be used for the emotional and spiritual support for all Hospice patients.
- Offering Hospice patients an opportunity to have a voice by completing a 'Compassion Survey', as able and willing.

Southwood Care Centre Quality Projects

Long Term Care

The Quality Project at Southwood Care Centre in long term care aims to decrease the site's percentage of residents who are on chemical restraints by 15% overall within the next year. This project includes the following strategies:

- Case Managers will review residents who are on chemical restraints on a monthly basis.
- Residents who have potential to have their chemical restraints reduced or discontinued will be identified by Nurses, Health Care Aides (HCAs) and Physicians and then discussed by the multidisciplinary team during clinical rounds on a bi-weekly basis.
- Residents who have been on chemical restraints where there is no change in behavior will be screened and attempts made to decrease or change the medications.
- Residents on chemical restraints will be assessed for side-effects.
- Prior to a chemical restraint being initiated, residents will be assessed for 'triggers' of behavior and whether alternative therapies may be effective (e.g. pain management, bowel routine, etc.).
- PRN usage will be assessed, including potential to reduce or discontinue the PRNs if they have not been used in the last 3 months.

Special Care Unit (SCU)

The Quality Project on the SCU unit at the Southwood Care Centre is focused on ensuring that Antipsychotics being used on the unit are appropriately and effectively managing resident behaviors. Although the majority of residents on the SCU do not have a diagnosis of psychosis, most of them do have unpredictable and challenging behaviours that often result in both verbal and physical aggression towards others and self. In addition to the use of other alternative interventions to manage this, these types of behaviors also require pharmaceutical management (i.e. the use of Antipsychotics as a last line of treatment to help deal with the behaviours).

With the above in mind, this project includes the following strategies:

- Six (6) residents who are on Antipsychotics and who do not have a diagnosis of psychosis will be identified.
- A review of their medications will be conducted on a quarterly basis with Physicians, including review and discussion regarding the effectiveness and appropriateness of the Antipsychotics in use.
- Education will continue to be provided to staff, as needed, regarding the appropriate use of Antipsychotics.

Southwood Hospice

The Quality Project at Southwood Hospice is focused on helping the Hospice Team identify and increase their awareness of risk factors and signs associated with 'compassion fatigue' and burnout, to support staff wellness and maintain a high functioning team.

This project includes the following strategies:

- Provide staff education regarding the impacts of dealing with death and end of life issues.
- Provide team building activities to reduce overall stress and promote casual gatherings to facilitate communication.
- Provide reminders and resources on the importance of self care.
- Provide formal and informal debriefs to provide support to staff and the opportunity to learn from each other's experiences, as well as share and express ideas and perspectives.
- Utilize regular and random meetings, including casual 1:1 meetings with staff.
- Utilize Internal and External Resources to provide supportive sessions.

Kingsland Terrace Supportive Living Quality Projects

The Quality Project at Kingsland Terrace Supportive Living is focused on creating a collaborative approach whereby inter-professional teams work together, in partnership with residents and their families to achieve optimal health outcomes.

This project includes the following strategies:

- Collaborative care is grounded in three principles:
 - ◆ Patient centered care;
 - ◆ Team effectiveness;
 - ◆ Staff functioning within a safe, high quality of care delivery model.

