

Guidelines For a Palliative Approach in Residential Aged Care

Why were the Guidelines developed?

Over the last two decades, research has indicated that the number of people dying in Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs) has steadily increased. In addition residents have increasingly complex conditions often with co-morbidities.

The aged care industry and the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing recognised that although there are standards for palliative care and aged care, they do not fully address the unique and complex issues of residents and their families.

The Guidelines were developed as a tool to support the introduction of a palliative approach for residents and their families to enhance the care already provided in RACFs in Australia.

How were the Guidelines developed?

The Australian Palliative Residential Aged Care (APRAC) project team, led by Edith Cowan University, developed these Guidelines for the residential aged care setting. The team had expertise in aged care, palliative care, and education, guideline development, dementia, cultural issues and volunteers. Extensive consultation was undertaken during the development of the Guidelines through a network developed for the purpose and encompassing aged and palliative care sectors. The development of the Guidelines was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

How can you use the Guidelines?

The Guidelines are not meant to be rigid, prescriptive pathways on what must be done in an RACF. Rather, they aim to prompt creative solutions that will be appropriate to the particular RACF where palliative approach is being applied. They may be used to identify strengths and weaknesses of the approach taken, and provide a mechanism for change and evaluation. The Guidelines have been developed after a major study of relevant literature. Attached to the Guidelines is a list of literature that practitioners

can see at a glance where there is research-based support for the practices and beliefs common in a palliative approach.

What is contained in the Guidelines?

In summary the Guidelines address the following topics:

- A Palliative Approach:
 - When should a palliative approach be implemented?
 - Where can a palliative approach be provided?
 - Who can provide a palliative approach?
- Dignity and Quality of Life
- Advance Care Planning
- Advanced Dementia
- Physical Symptoms: Symptom assessment, Pain management, Fatigue, Nutrition and hydration, Anorexia, Cachexia, Dysphagia, Mouth care, Skin integrity, Bowel care, Dyspnoea, Complementary therapies
- Psychological Support: Depression, Anxiety, Delirium, Dementia (psychological aspects)
- Family Support
- Social Support, Intimacy and Sexuality
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Issues
- Cultural Issues
- Spiritual Support
- Volunteer Support
- End-of-Life (Terminal) Care
- Bereavement Support
- Management's Role in Implementing a Palliative Approach.

Where can I learn more?

To obtain a hard copy contact 1800 020 787. The Guidelines are also available on CD-ROM.

The complete Guidelines may be downloaded through:

- Palliative Care Australia's website: www.palliativecare.org.au
- Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing website: www.health.gov.au.

