

Wound Management Pilot Project in Residential Aged Care

Gold Coast Primary Health Network (funded by the Department of Health) in partnership with Wound Specialist Services Pty Ltd have been working together on the Wound Management Pilot in Residential Aged Care Facilities from September 2021 to December 2022. The pilot project was open to all 57 Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs) across the GCPHN region.



WOUND SPECIALIST
Services

phn
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An Australian Government Initiative

Aim

The aim of the project was to improve outcomes for older people living in RACFs who are living with chronic and complex wounds. Key objectives of the project were to:

- Reduce potentially preventable hospitalisations
- Improve access and equity to specialist wound care services
- Build capacity of RACF staff when caring for residents with wounds
- Improve knowledge, skills, and confidence of RACF staff
- Enhance intersectoral collaboration and coordination

Method

The pilot project involved two components:

1. Education Program

- Virtual membership program (Skin and Wound Action Team)
- Practical skills workshops

2. Clinical Services

- Telehealth consultations
- Onsite consultations

Results

Evaluation of participants revealed that the main benefits of the pilot project included:

- Improved **quality of life** for residents
- Nursing staff & clinical managers felt more **supported**
- Have better **evidence** to support treatment
- More support new graduates with education
- Ongoing **monitoring** of wound progress
- **Sharing** of education
- Staff had **better skills** with how to assess wounds
- Able to access **advice** on product choices/dressings
- Quick treatment
- **No need for referral**
- Expert advice for residents with complex wounds
- **Guidance** on how to treat wounds
- Increased healing rates
- **Empowered** staff and improved knowledge, confidence & ability
- Improved consistency with wound care

The most common wound types encountered in the pilot project were pressure injuries, lower limb ulcers and cancerous wounds. Most of these wounds were **facility acquired** and were largely **preventable**.

Prior to the project, 60% of wound specialist appointments were at the Gold Coast University Hospital. By participating in the project, all wound specialist appointments were provided within the RACFs via telehealth or onsite.

Summary

This project has provided much needed evidence of the effectiveness and acceptability of this nurse-led model of service delivery. Telehealth is a valuable tool increasing access to specialist wound care in the aged care setting. The education and support provided by Wound Specialist Services at the point-of-care, builds capacity and capability of care providers. The practical, evidenced based strategies that can be implemented into everyday clinical practice, enables, and empowers the workforce and improves the safety and quality of care.