

A Self Directed Learning Package for Continence Promotion for People Living with Mental Illness

Background

The purpose of this study is to revise a resource developed for the Commonwealth Government under a previous research grant, in consultation with people with mental illness and incontinence, and the staff who care for them in community settings. This resource, entitled "*Continence Management for people living with mental illness in Supported Residential Facilities (SRFs)*" was first published in 2002 and was released as part of the National Continence Management Strategy. The intent is to develop a self directed learning package that will enable better utilisation of the resource.

Almost all copies of the original resource have been disseminated. Indeed informal feedback suggests that the resource is highly regarded and in demand. We are aware that the resource has been used in diverse care services for people with disability. Importantly, there have been a number of primary health care initiatives implemented as a result of the attention on the inequity in access to health resources and the challenging living conditions for residents of SRFs.

This current project proposal responds to the recommendations made by the independent evaluation advisor, who suggested that a formal assessment of the information resource is undertaken and made available to services and accommodation providers across Australia. The information resource has received attention and acclaim at both a national and international level.

The previous project revealed several salient points:

- Carers and other residents often victimized incontinent residents.
- People living with mental illness in SRFs are not receiving the level of continence care required.
- Nocturnal incontinence was common among these participants, and was often related to the sedative effects of anti-psychotic medications.
- Better management of incontinence does improve the quality of life for people living with mental illness in SRFs.
- People who have mental illness respond positively to a participatory approach to continence care.
- Carers employed by SRFs are in a prime position to facilitate participatory approaches to continence promotion.

In collaboration with residents, individual care plans for continence promotion were agreed upon and responses to the plan monitored. The residents demonstrated that generally, they had the capacity to self manage their incontinence through the development of actions that they perceived as being possible in their lives.

The initial project was collaboratively undertaken by the Royal District Nursing Service, Western Mental Health Service, the Supported Residential Facilities Association, and the Northern Division of General Practitioners. The benefit of this existing organisational network

will ensure that the necessary skills, resources, structures and processes to carry out the research surrounding the resource revision are provided.

Aim

This project aims to further develop a self directed learning resource book that will advocate a participatory action approach to continence promotion with people who have mental illness.

To achieve this aim, the objectives in the development of the self directed learning resource book are to:

- Provide grounded educational strategies which recognises an active, constructive role for learners;
- Engage the learner in active processing of the subject matter;
- Establish learning settings and tasks that promote meaningful communication and interaction between teachers and learners;
- Develop content resources which are visually attractive, motivating to use and organised logically for ease of navigation;
- Provide representations of authentic and real life settings in preference to textual descriptions.

Further details

For more information about this project please contact the RDNS Research Unit on (08) 8206 0111 or email researchunit@rdns.org.au