

**Submission
No 95**

**INQUIRY INTO REGISTERED NURSES IN NEW SOUTH
WALES NURSING HOMES**

Name: Ms Lynette Cochran

Date received: 24/07/2015

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW. 2000

RECEIVED
24 JUL 2015

Key Issues

- . Nursing homes are understaffed due in no small part to people living longer.
- . Residents need more care than was previously required when entering a nursing home, current residents often being more frail than previous residents.
- . Registered nurses supervise those working under them. Their work is vital to the health and well being of the residents.
- . Registered nurses do manage critical incidents minimizing the incidents of hospital admissions, conferring with doctors and undertaking relevant procedures.
- . Already the ratio of carers to residents has been reduced. Any further reduction to ratio of registered nurses will see more preventible incidents in nursing homes occurring.
- . Registered nurses have had appropriate training in the administering of the various medications so many residents are prescribed.
- . Registered nurses are trained in record keeping and documentation of medication to a high level.

Evidence

- . Registered nurses have a greater understanding of health problems and how to deal with them than assistant nurses due to their extensive training and experience.
- . Enrolled nurses can deliver medication but still need to be supervised by a registered nurse. Hence registered nurses are essential.
- . Without registered nurses some of checks and balances would be placed on other workers who are already finding it difficult to complete all their tasks.
- . Registered nurses have sought a profession.
- . Assistant nurses often can not find any other form of work.
- . Unemployed people are often advised to become care workers. Not all are suited to the task.
- . Assistant nurse qualification is a relevant certificate II and MAY be required when working in some nursing homes, Therefore not all staff employed in nursing homes have experience or training on how to look after those so vulnerable in their care.

Case study

. My mother was admitted over 6 years ago to what was then a low care nursing home. Medication was administered by assistant nurses. It was of constant concern to my family that often medication was forgotten or administered incorrectly to some of the residents. Fortunately my mother only has medication for minor health issues, generally pain relief. There was only one registered nurse who was busy Monday to Friday running the facility, not allowing her to supervise closely the administering of medication..

. As mum's dementia developed, mum needed more care and was moved to a high care facility where there were registered nurses on duty 24/7. It was such a relief to our family. Health problems can develop at any time of the day or night, or any day of the week. Registered nurses can deal with health issues immediately, or advise doctors concisely of concerns as happened recently.

. Of concern however is the fact that whilst my mother's needs for assistance have increased dramatically, there has been no increase in the number of staff. Mum went from high care to requiring even a higher level of care. Mum, as well as others in her facility, has declined from being able to feed herself and move around. Now she needs assistance with every aspect of her daily life with no additional staff being provided. Hence the staff are often unable to give the residents their morning and afternoon tea, keeping the residents hydrated. Also personal care is often neglected due to the heavy workload. Staff are often rushed as there is so much work to be done. The staff are committed to providing the best possible care but it is often impossible to provide the required level due to insufficient staff, sickness and non replacement often also playing a part, especially in winter.

. Whenever there is an assessment of the home, additional staff are employed. When asked about any concerns, for five years I been stating the home is understaffed. Apparently most nursing homes are regarded as under staffed! A fact the assessors are well aware.

Recommendation

- . The current number of registered nurses in nursing homes should be maintained, if not increased.
- . It is desirable that Assistant nurses employed in nursing homes have at least a Certificate II, unless they have years of experience, and their numbers increased.
- . There should always be a registered nurse on duty to monitor and assist the residents and other staff members.
- . Staff should be appointed in sufficient numbers to facilitate meeting to needs of the residents, especially those who require an even greater level of high care.
- . Only those who have been trained in the administration of medications, not non-registered nurses, should administer the often sophisticated drugs around today.

Hospital setting versus nursing home

- . There seemed to be more staff in the hospital when mum was there six-seven years ago.
- . Hospital staff seem to have very defined roles with not anyone able to administer medication
- . Both hospitals and nursing homes could do with additional staff.

Conclusion

- . I hoped that the current provision of registered nurses is maintained.
- . A short shift from the time of morning tea until afternoon tea would make a huge difference to the home where my mother is.

Sincerely yours

Lynette Cochran

July 20, 2015

Attachment

WHO Document improving medication safety