Providing emotional support & education in aged care

We understand that older adults living in residential aged care can feel anxious and depressed but few residents have easy access to emotional support. Staff and family members can also feel unsure how to help.

The Elders at Ease (ELATE) program is a flagship mental health program for residential communities. **ELATE provides 16 weeks of an individualised program to residents, as well as education and support to facility staff and the residents’ family/friends.**

The research is led by Professor Sunil Bhar from Swinburne University and funded by the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council together with Beyond Blue. There is no cost to participate.

The Elders AT Ease program aims to:

- Improve the mood and quality of life of residents
- Provide mental health training for staff and families
- Provide support to staff, family and friends throughout the program
- Evaluate the short and long-term impact of the program
- Encourage best practice for facilities

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What does the program involve?
As this is a research project, participating facilities will be randomly allocated to receive the treatment or continue usual care. By doing this we can learn more about the factors that create change in both usual care and the program.

ELATE Program (Treatment) facilities will receive:
- 16 face-to-face sessions between a counsellor and resident (1 hour session per week)
- Training workshops for staff and families on understanding and managing resident’s symptoms of depression and anxiety (4 hours)
- Monthly support group for families and a monthly consultation session for staff (1 hour per month)

Usual-Care (Control) facilities will receive:
- Educational materials for facilities and staff
- Four ELATE staff visits with the residents which make residents feel valued
- Optional free aged care seminars for all staff to attend at Swinburne University

What do we ask?
- Staff to refer residents who may benefit from the program*
- To help evaluate the program we ask residents, family and staff to complete short questionnaires every 2-3 months during the program

Potential benefits:
- Improved wellbeing and quality of life of residents
- Increased staff and family knowledge about mental health
- Staff learn skills that are transferrable to all residents
- Advice and evidence-based materials on how to support resident emotional wellbeing
- Good practice for facilities

* eligible residents must have symptoms of depression (≥9 on the Cornell) and no significant cognitive impairment (≤ 9 on the PAS-CIS)

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**HOW DO WE GET INVOLVED?**
To find out more about this program and to schedule an information visit from our team, contact Rebecca Collins (rebeccacollins@swin.edu.au) or Dr Joanna Waloszek (92143371; jwaloszek@swin.edu.au)

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