Welcome to the first edition of the project Newsletter. This project was funded in 2014 by the Commonwealth Government through the Department of Social Services under the Aged Care Service Improvement and Healthy Ageing Grant Scheme. Flinders University, Resthaven Inc. and Anglicare Inc. SA formed a consortium to develop and implement the project led by Flinders University.

We sincerely thank staff, residents and their representatives from Resthaven Leabrook, Resthaven Murray Bridge, Anglicare Westbourne Park and Anglicare Trott Park who participated in the interviews and focus groups.

We welcome staff, residents and their representatives to contribute to the Newsletter by sharing their journey and stories in cross-cultural care.

Introducing the project and the team

With the ageing of multicultural Australia, a growing number of residents in residential aged care (RAC) are from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and have diverse care needs. Similarly, the workforce in Residential Aged Care (RAC) is increasingly diverse posing both opportunities and challenges for quality care for residents and for the workforce development.

Project team (photo): Associate Prof Lily Xiao (team leader), Associate Prof David Gillham, Ms Wendy Morey (Resthaven Inc), Associate Prof Ann Harrington, Ms Lesley Jeffers (Anglicare Inc.SA), Prof Eileen Willis, Ms Jenny Verbeeck, Dr Anita De Bellis, and Ms Pam Smith.

“Australia’s multicultural policy acknowledges that government services and programs must be responsive to the needs of our culturally diverse communities. It commits to an access and equity framework to ensure that the onus is on government to provide equitable services to Australians from all backgrounds”.


Our Objectives

- Identify key factors enabling or impeding cross-cultural care.
- Determine a MCWD model to address the key factors identified.
- Embed the MCWD model in workforce management and care staff’s day-to-day activities.
- Develop and implement a training package.
- Evaluate the impact of the MCWD model and the training package.
- Disseminate the MCWD model and the training package to the wider Residential Aged Care industry.
Two multicultural workforce development facilitators have been appointed. They are Ms Lesley Habel (left), Resthaven Inc. and Dr Valerie Adams (right), Anglicare Inc. SA.

We will seek to develop and implement a multicultural workforce development (MCWD) model to support the education and training of staff and enable them to continue to provide, and enhance culturally appropriate high-quality care to residents.

What we have accomplished

The project is now well under way and the major activities undertaken include:
- Interviews with 30 residents (or representatives).
- Focus groups/interviews with 56 staff across the sites.
- Pilot cross-cultural care audits in the four participating sites.
- Data from interviews/focus groups have been analysed by the Flinders team members.
- Preliminary findings have been drafted and reviewed by representatives from Resthaven Inc. Anglicare Inc. SA.

What we are going to do next

- A multi-cultural workforce development (MCWD) model will be developed and consultative workshops will be conducted to finalise the model.
- An education/training package for staff will be developed to support the MCWD model.

- Site champions will be appointed to assist the implementation of the MCWD model.
- The multi-cultural workforce development facilitators will deliver the education/training package in the participating facilities.

Diversity in residential care facilities

Provided by Resthaven Inc. and Anglicare SA Inc.

Did you know that Resthaven’s employee’s come from 72 different countries, and residents and clients from 78? Anglicare SA also shares similar diversity among its residents and staff. The top ten countries of birth outside of Australia for residents and clients and the top ten countries of birth outside of Australia for staff are outlined in the Table:
Resthaven: a culturally inclusive community

Ms Wendy Morey and Ms Lesley Habel, Resthaven Inc.

Introduction to the Multicultural Project Officer Role

One way larger aged care organisations can consider supporting cultural competence is through the role of a multicultural project officer. At Resthaven this role was introduced in 2007 to assist the organisation to respond in a culturally responsive manner and to ensure that all cultures were considered when providing quality aged care.

Priscilla DePree (see photo) is Resthaven’s Multicultural Project Officer. She joined the organisation in 2012 having moved to Australia from the Netherlands some years earlier. Her native tongue is Dutch however Priscilla speaks English fluently, as this was a compulsory second language learnt by all in the Netherlands. Priscilla also speaks French and German, maintaining the dialects by regularly reading newspaper articles or books in these languages. Since her time with Resthaven Priscilla has been instrumental in promoting strong linkages with South Australian CALD communities. One of the recent projects Priscilla was involved in was titled ‘Aged Care Discussions’ funded by the Department of Social Services under the Aged Care Service Improvement and Healthy Ageing Grants initiatives.

Resthaven partnered with six small culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in SA who were identified as having only minimal ethno-specific aged care services, information and support. The aim of the ‘Aged Care Discussions’ project was to increase the CALD community members’ access to accurate, up to date information in their own language. The six identified communities involved were the Bulgarian, Czech, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Russian and Slovak communities. As a result of this project six directories were developed in the culturally specific language and titled ‘Where do I start? Information for Seniors’. The directories are available on the Resthaven website and are accompanied by a ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ information sheet; also available in each language.

Apart from Priscilla’s project work she actively engages with Resthaven’s residential and community care sites, championing cultural awareness and good practices. Priscilla supports the needs of individual residents with respect to their culture by providing materials in their language, linking the resident with culturally specific visitor programs, and educating staff in culturally sensitive care practices. Each fortnight Priscilla is part of the Resthaven Corporate Induction for all new staff, facilitating a ‘Cultural Awareness’ session.

Resthaven aims to share some of the good work that Priscilla, their Multicultural Project Office, does in each project newsletter however encourages staff, residents, clients and the public to contact her via email on PDePree@resthaven.asn.au for multicultural care related questions.
At Anglicare SA, Grandview Court, Cultural Diversity is seen as an Asset

Ms Lesley Jeffers, Anglicare SA Inc.

Recognising the increasing diversity in both our staff and residents has led to a rethink of some of the Lifestyle Activities the home is utilising.

Incorporating cultural themes, traditions and customs into the lifestyle programming has allowed residents and staff to experience both their own and other cultures thereby contributing to a sense of community in the facility. Cultural theme weeks unites all the staff in offering traditional foods, dress, daily rituals and traditional customs – all much to the delight of the residents and their families.

By celebrating the various cultural traditions, staff and residents are given the chance to understand and appreciate the positive contributions different cultures make to the environment.

The experience culminates in an armchair travel experience designed for easy viewing and listening in a movie presentation of photos and music on a larger than life screen.

Embracing cultural diversity as an asset can help us enhance care and support our staff and residents.

Indigenous aged care: cultural considerations

Professor Eileen Willis, Flinders University

An increasing number of Aboriginal people and their families are seeking residential aged care. Like all other residents they live in a society where their culture is changing and adapting to the world around them.

Socio economic differences

Aboriginal people on average seek aged care packages at an earlier age than non-aboriginal Australians. This is a result of their poorer health status and higher mortality rates. The life expectancy of Aboriginal Australians is lower than that of the non-Aboriginal population. Mindful of this the Commonwealth Government set the age for access to aged care packages at 50 instead of 70 for Indigenous populations.

What about culture?

Many Aboriginal communities in remote Australia have their own residential aged care centre. Local Aboriginal people work as personal carers along with registered and enrolled nurses. This care requires cultural considerations. If you were an Aboriginal personal care worker you may not be able to look after everyone. While family is very important to Aboriginal people, and people take their family responsibilities very seriously there are certain avoidance relationships that mean people do not talk to each other - mother and son-in-law is one such relationship.

Funerals are also very important cultural events within remote and urban Aboriginal communities. While people in remote communities may be careful not to say the name of a person once they have died, and they may avoid the house where the elderly person lived and died for a short period, they will still attend the funeral, even if it means travelling for many days and at considerable
expense. For this reason, residential aged care homes need to be close to where people were born, and in some cases they may bring in elders to perform ceremonies that restore the harmony of the site following a death.

The cultural wishes of Aboriginal people living in the city may differ from Aboriginal people in remote Australia. As always the best way to find out resident’s cultural wishes is to ask them or their family.


Outline of findings from interviews and focus groups with stakeholders

Associate Professor Lily Xiao, Flinders University

Between May and August 2015, 30 residents/representatives and 56 staff across the four participating facilities participated in interviews or focus groups. Of the participants 30% were from CALD groups.

Residents’ and representatives’ positive experiences in cross-cultural care

Residents and representatives reported that staff from various cultural backgrounds demonstrated caring, respect, thoughtfulness and consideration. They recognised that these caring behaviours were universal and espoused by all cultures. They were satisfied with care and services provided by the multicultural team because of their caring approach. They also enjoyed the diversity in the care facility. They observed that staff always tried their best to accommodate their food preferences and choice of activities and services. Staff also supported networks for residents and enabled them to engage in meaningful interactions with family and friends.

Quotes from residents
-All the staff are patient and all the ones that I see are patient and helpful as well.
-Oh yeah well you can talk to the staff any one of them you know man or woman they're all very kind and gentle and thoughtful.

Staff’s positive experiences in cross-cultural care

Quotes from staff
-You just have to be respectful of the individual as well, and get to know them before you can treat them a certain way.
-We learn each other’s cultural background and knowing that I think the quality of care it’s good.

Staff reported that there was strong leadership in responding to challenges and opportunities arising from workplace diversity. Leadership was not only demonstrated by those staff in management positions, but also by those who provide direct care for residents. Peer support for CALD staff to assist them to adapt to culturally appropriate practices in residential care facilities was perceived as a most effective way to improve cross-cultural care and to integrate CALD staff to the workforce. Cultural awareness is strengthened when staff engage in activities that enables them to compare their culture with other cultures. Staff who
demonstrated humility in cross-cultural interactions were highly regarded by residents and colleagues. CALD staff felt that they were valuable members of the care team when they had opportunities to lead and contribute to cross-cultural care using their linguistic ability.

The areas that need to be further developed
Residents and staff also identified areas that need to be further developed. These suggestions may not be related to project sites but aged care services in general. First, effective cross-cultural communication is a challenge given the increasing proportion of residents and staff who are from backgrounds where English is not their first language. Second, more culturally and linguistically appropriate activities are needed for CALD residents. Third, resources, knowledge and skills in cross-cultural care and services need to be further developed to meet the demand for more choices in care and service. Additionally, staff sometimes encountered negative attitudes in cross-cultural interactions.

Quotes from management groups
- Culture that impacts on what we do; the way we live.
- We have to know about the culture before we can deliver and what we think is right.
- We need to provide ongoing support for CALD staff.
- We need to have some champions in the workplace.

Resthaven Celebrates Harmony Day
Ms Wendy Morey and Ms Lesley Habel, Resthaven Inc.

To celebrate cross-cultural diversity, Resthaven celebrated a ‘Taste of Harmony’ at sites during the week 16-22 March, 2015.

A ‘Taste of Harmony’ is celebrated in Australian workplaces each year with thousands of organisations hosting a lunch, morning or afternoon tea. The celebration invites colleagues to bring a traditional dish from their culture to share. Food is the central theme that encourages story telling about home lands and culture.

The message that Resthaven supported during Harmony Day was ‘everyone belongs’. The meaning of this is that Resthaven is an inclusive community of people sharing a common goal to provide outstanding care for older people and their carers, regardless of race or culture. Staff from Resthaven’s Head Office gathered for a shared lunch, featuring dishes from countries such as India, Vietnam, the Netherlands, Scotland, El Salvador, England, Philippines, and Australia.