Infection Prevention and Control challenges in Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes during COVID-19 Pandemic in Ontario, Canada

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This presentation aims to:

1. Describe the IPAC needs and barriers identified by Public Health Ontario (PHO) through observations from Long-term Care (LTC) & Retirement Home (RH) Visits during the COVID-19 pandemic

2. Inform future IPAC supports for the long-term care sector
PHO Supportive Visits to Ontario LTC and RHs

• Between April 21, 2020 and June 16, 2021, Public Health Ontario IPAC Specialists in collaboration with local Public Health Units (PHU) conducted 139 on-site and 33 virtual visits in LTC/RH
• 64 LTC/RH were in outbreak and 3 had recently resolved outbreaks
• LTC/RHs were prioritized for assessments based on pre-visit questionnaires completed in cooperation with local PHUs
PHO Supportive Visits to Ontario LTC and RHs (continued)

• Assessments facilitated by a tool developed by PHO

• Following the assessments, a report with findings and recommendations were shared with the Health Unit and LTCH/RH

• A thematic analysis of the reports found common challenges in several areas
What is the Data Telling Us?
LTC/RH Visits by Provincial Region

- East, 35%
- Central, 28%
- West, 13%
- North, 22%
- Toronto, 3%
Frequency of Recommendations in LTC/RH

- PPE, 28%
- Environmental Cleaning, 16%
- Screening, 21%
- Physical Distancing, 16%
- Cohorting, 6%
- Hand Hygiene, 11%
- Other, 2%
PPE
PPE - Common Themes

- Inappropriate glove and gown use
- PPE reuse
- Gaps in masking - inappropriate use and lack of supplies
PPE (continued)

• Stakeholders requested specific information on:
  • Masking requirements/exemptions
  • Mask and respirator use
  • Evidence of layering multiple masks (i.e., doubling masks)
  • Eye protection and face shields (help with product selection, disinfecting protocols and when to use)
  • General donning and doffing protocols for PPE
  • PPE needs based on staff role (e.g., staff delivering meals)
  • Required PPE for AGMPs
Screening
Screening - Common Themes

• Improper screening area set up
• No formal screening process
• Inappropriate screener PPE use
• Incorrect screening questions asked at entrance
• Alcohol based hand rub (ABHR) and disinfectant wipes not available at the screening area
Physical Distancing
Physical Distancing - Common Themes

- Challenges were identified with how to set up physical distancing in common areas, activity rooms and dining rooms
- Challenges were identified with how to set up physical distancing for staff on break or lunches or during team meetings
Environmental Cleaning (EC)
Environmental Cleaning – Common Themes

- No auditing process
- Incorrect use and selection of wipes and cleaning products
- Undefined process for cleaning high touch surfaces
- Insufficient staff and training: other non-environmental services staff (e.g. maintenance) were assigned to environmental cleaning to meet enhanced needs but did not receive necessary training
- Deficient cleaning of shared equipment
- Uncertainty around cleaning during outbreaks
Hand Hygiene
Hand Hygiene – Common Themes

- ABHR not available or insufficient alcohol concentration
- Lack of hand hygiene auditing
- Excessive glove use and improper hand hygiene
- Improper Hand Hygiene Technique
- Need for support with the audit tool/calculations
- Request for training (online modules, videos) and print materials
Cohorting
Cohorting – Identified Issues

- Lack of available staff for homes to follow cohorting guidelines
- Not understanding how to cohort
- Room cleaning delays
- Improper allocation of staff and flow for resident care
Future Considerations
Future Considerations - Education and Training

• Selecting hospital grade cleaner/disinfectant with a Drug Identification Number (DIN)
• Disinfectant concentrations, proper application of cleaning products and contact time
• Defined processes for cleaning high touch surfaces and tracking when cleaning occurred
• Choosing the correct PPE following point of care risk assessments (PCRA)
• Donning and doffing PPE, including on the spot PPE training and well as facility-wide auditing
• Accessing updated Ministry Guidance
Future Considerations – Implementation Support

• Development of an Environmental cleaning (EC) process tracking system
• Regular review of EC processes including on the spot EC training
• Homes may benefit from assistance in monitoring or auditing hand hygiene compliance
• Including training for facility wide hand hygiene auditing in this process
Future Considerations - Tailoring Strategies/Resources

• Practicing physical distancing with residents and staff
• Providing care to cohorts
• Balancing ethics and IPAC
• Translating resources into multiple languages
• Collaborating with BIPOC partners
• On-site support, coaching/mentorship
Opportunities to Improve IPAC Knowledge/Effectiveness

- Community of Practices (CoPs) specific to LTC/Novice ICPs
- Interactive and engaging education
- Supporting and developing strong IPAC Champions
- Support and collaboration from IPAC specialist
- Consistent guidance and recommendations
Positive Approaches to Building & Enhancing IPAC Culture

• Building trusting relationships with all stakeholders
• Good communication
• Understanding and awareness of barriers
• Being flexible and innovative
• Collaboration
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