



MEDIA RELEASE

22 January 2019

Safeguarding against inappropriate use of physical or chemical restraint

The role of the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission is to protect and enhance the health, safety, well-being and quality of life for all aged care consumers.

The Commission promotes the provision of safe, quality aged care and services by holding service providers to account against the legally-mandated Quality Standards.

Because of the potential risks posed to the safety, health and wellbeing of aged care consumers, restrictive practices are given careful attention by Commission staff when assessing a provider's compliance with the Quality Standards and investigating complaints about aged care providers. We schedule regular unannounced visits based on complaints data and other intelligence, including any information about inappropriate use of restraints.

The Commission is extremely concerned if any aged care consumer is being inappropriately restrained, either through physical means such as the use of a belt, or chemical means such as by using antipsychotic medication.

The Commission requires all residential aged care services to demonstrate that alternative strategies are used to manage challenging behaviours. Where absolutely necessary and therapeutically indicated, use of restraints such as antipsychotic medications must be a last resort and for as little time as possible, consistent with best practice guidance.

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner Ms Janet Anderson said: "The recent questions and concerns raised about the use of restraints in the aged care sector has further sharpened our focus on this important area of care.

"As the national regulator, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission responds quickly to identified issues and concerns and welcomes contact from anyone concerned about their loved ones in aged care services.

"Service providers can now expect that we will specifically ask them about their restrictive practices when we visit a service. They should be able to point to genuine and sustained efforts to use alternative strategies, and also have in place an effective oversight system for any form of restraint in use for any resident.

“In terms of the required oversight system, my assessment teams are looking for evidence such as the presence of informed consent from the consumer or a properly authorised person. We want to see that the service is applying best practice in matters such as effective clinical governance, regular review by health professionals, pharmacists, and communication with the general practitioner or geriatrician, and that records are kept of the outcome of these reviews.

“We are also working to raise awareness about the risks of inappropriate use of physical or chemical restraint. In the first instance, I have asked the Commission’s interim Chief Clinical Advisor to identify information that can help providers to focus on the actions needed to improve their practices and support better outcomes for all consumers. We are also highlighting this issue through a case study in our upcoming Better Practice Series: Preparing for the new Standards which commences in February 2019,” Ms Anderson said.

Where an aged care service is found not to meet an expected outcome or outcomes under the Quality Standards, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission sets a timetable for improvement that requires the provider to achieve compliance as soon as possible. Commission staff then monitor whether the identified areas for improvement have been addressed at the service. Significant sanctions can be applied by the Department of Health where a service fails to address areas of non-compliance.

If anyone has a concern or wishes to make a complaint about an aged care service, they should contact the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission on 1800 951 822.

Further information about the Commission’s role can be found at agedcarequality.gov.au.

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