

RAISING THE BAR: COMMON ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT BENEFITS LONG-TERM CARE RESIDENTS



The quality of resident care in Ontario's nursing homes is key for residents, their families, and the healthcare sector as a whole. The Long-Term Care Homes Common Assessment Project (LTCH CAP) is playing a prominent role in addressing these concerns. The Project is a partnership with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Ontario Long-Term Care Association and the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, and has been facilitating and supporting the implementation of a standardized and automated common assessment instrument known as the **Resident Assessment Instrument Minimum Data Set (RAI-MDS 2.0)**. Just over two years into this initiative, residents and the sector as a whole are reaping the benefits.

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Today, homes use a variety of methods to capture residents' abilities, preferences and care needs when they create care plans. While standards are often very high, the lack of consistency and the ability to gather standardized, evidence-based clinical information makes it difficult to compare and improve the quality of care. It also restricts the ability for homes to exchange information efficiently with other health agencies. The RAI-MDS 2.0 addresses these needs by producing consistent and detailed resident information that is analyzed using scientifically proven decision frameworks.

RAI instruments are currently being used in more than 30 countries including the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, France, Japan and Australia as well as several provinces and territories in Canada. Ontario is now amongst the leaders, using the full RAI-MDS 2.0 approach to create in-depth care plans. By incorporating each resident's strengths, preferences and needs into the assessment from all aspects of the care team involved, the results enable an in-depth care plan that is tailored to the resident.

Currently, 35% of Ontario's long-term care homes have implemented or are in the process of implementing RAI-MDS 2.0. During this process important benefits have already become evident within the homes.

“Due to a more detailed approach to assessing each resident, we have found that there is now a more holistic approach to caring for the resident,” says Susan Reed, formerly the Administrator at Extencicare New Orchard Lodge during their implementation of RAI-MDS 2.0. “There is no doubt that a more thorough assessment is done on each of our residents, which gives us a lot of information to help us know our resident, their family and past history much better.”

While the benefits to resident care are remarkable, they don't stop there. As Rene Beroy, an RN at Castleview Wychwood Towers explains:

“Front-line staff are more involved during the assessment process, which ultimately empowers them and makes them realize how important they are in the team.”

As nursing staff get familiar with the new assessment tool, they also acquire an asset that helps their career going forward. “It allows nurses to have current up-to-date computer skills, which makes them more marketable,” explains Sylvia Alloy-Kommusaar, an RN at Extencicare Van Daele. “More and more homes will be using RAI-MDS 2.0. If a nurse has to relocate for personal or professional reasons, it will be an easier transition.”

The successful operation of a long-term care home requires the synchronization of several disciplines. With common assessment timelines and language, the instrument is proving to enhance interdisciplinary teamwork.

“The RAI-MDS 2.0 has also assisted us in developing a team, which allows all disciplines to determine the resident's care needs and provide a more personal approach in delivering that care.” Says Sherri Filograno, an RPN at Hogarth Riverview Manor.

As homes implement RAI-MDS 2.0, they are provided with support and resources from the Project. This includes free training and tools, guidance and support throughout the 12-month implementation period, and access to the Online Project Support Portal, a useful intranet site that includes documentation and updated information on all aspects of the initiative.

With the benefits to residents, nursing staff, and improvements in the homes increasingly evident, everyone can be proud of the progress that has been made so far towards providing long-term care residents with the highest quality of care.

For more information on RAI-MDS 2.0 and the LTCH CAP Project, please contact the Project Support Centre at 416.314.7365/1.866.909.5600 or LTCHProject.moh@ontario.ca.

