Reviewer's report

Title: People living in Nursing Care Facilities who are ambulant and fracture their hips: description of usual care and an alternative rehabilitation pathway.

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Reviewer: Mary Godfrey

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This study is part of a randomised trial (SACRED trial), which investigated the efficacy of a four week in-reach rehabilitation program during which data were also collected which described routine care for 240 people living in 76 nursing care facilities in South Australia who fractured their hips. This study draws on data gathered during the 4 weeks post-discharge period after return to their nursing home of participants, most of whom were living with dementia, to a) examine the kind of services provided and b) explore the type, intensity, and methods used to encourage rehabilitation among those who received the intervention. Adverse events that occurred, in particular falls, are also reported. is an excellent article and adds to understanding of the process of rehabilitation for people with dementia. Methods of data gathering included 1) completion of an audit of health related care use for each individual as part of their routine care during the 4-week period; 2) completion of a therapeutic environment screening survey for each participant; and 3) collection of data using a range of methods, including contemporaneous logs of treatment maintained by therapists and weekly inter-disciplinary meetings with the trial coordinator. The study both differentiated between 'usual care' and provides an in-depth account of the methods employed by therapists to engage with participants living with dementia. Data collection combining qualitative and quantitative methods are rigorous and relevant to the research questions posed. The findings both reveal the scope of the difference between usual case and the intervention; and the content of a flexible, complex model of inter-disciplinary rehabilitation that engages older people living with dementia. Current evidence regarding this group of people suggests that they are largely regarded as not 'rehabilitatable', borne out in this study as well in the lack of input provided to them in hospital prior to discharge to the nursing home. The description of the model of rehabilitation as delivered as part of the intervention offers new understanding of the elements of an approach that successfully engages with older people living with dementia. Importantly, it exposes the risk averse approach of nursing home staff and therefore the problem of reliance on 'usual care' to deliver appropriate care post hip fracture to these residents, posing the question as to whether a rehabilitation intervention of this type needs to incorporate cultural and practice change among nursing home staff to sustain positive change.

One aspect of the paper which lacks detail is how the qualitative data was analysed. This applies both to how the weekly discussions with therapists and the subsequent focus group with them at the end of the intervention, were recorded and analysed. The current description of analysis only relates to the quantitative data.

In summary, this is a valuable paper, of theoretical and practice interest.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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Yes

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