

Managing Faecal INcontinence in people with advanced dementia resident in Care Homes (FINCH) study: a realist synthesis of the evidence

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Declared competing interests of authors: Claire Goodman is a National Institute for Health Research Senior Investigator. Rowan Harwood is a member of the Health Technology Assessment Primary Care, Community and Preventive Interventions Panel. Jo Rycroft-Malone is Programme Director and Chairperson of the Health Services and Delivery Research Commissioning Board.

Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

Published August 2017

DOI: 10.3310/hta21420

Plain English summary

The FINCH study

Health Technology Assessment 2017; Vol. 21: No. 42

DOI: 10.3310/hta21420

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Plain English summary

One-third of people living with dementia are care home residents. Many experience faecal incontinence (FI). Using a method called realist synthesis, we considered which ways to improve continence care in care home settings were best supported by the evidence.

The review found that the majority of care home residents with FI will also be incontinent of urine. This suggests that there is limited value in focusing only on FI or on one possible cause of FI such as constipation. The research recognised that having dementia meant that a person was more likely to be incontinent, but how the symptoms of dementia affected a person's ability to benefit from different types of interventions was not assessed.

Staff knowledge, person-centred approaches to care and clinician involvement in assessing possible causes of FI are important in preventing, reducing and managing FI. Prompted toileting is an approach that is worth trying and may be particularly beneficial for some residents. However, staff need to have the authority to act on this knowledge and training, and the intervention needs to 'fit' into their everyday work patterns.

Interventions need to recognise that, in care homes, continence care is intimate work, linked to taking someone to the toilet or helping them wash. This work may be seen as routine but the evidence demonstrates that to prevent, reduce and manage FI, particular skills and expertise in dementia and continence care are required. This should be recognised within the organisation, supported with clinician input and be incorporated into future research and practice development.

ISSN 1366-5278 (Print)

ISSN 2046-4924 (Online)

Impact factor: 4.236

Health Technology Assessment is indexed in MEDLINE, CINAHL, EMBASE, The Cochrane Library and the Clarivate Analytics Science Citation Index.

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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HTA programme as project number 13/75/01. The contractual start date was in September 2014. The draft report began editorial review in February 2016 and was accepted for publication in December 2016. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HTA editors and publisher have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health.

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