

## Sigma Theta Tau International's 29th International Nursing Research Congress

### Managing Acute Episodic Illness in Specialist Disability Homes: A Qualitative Study of Professionals' Experiences

**Sarah Sami, MNP**

*Residential Inreach, Monash Health and Deakin University, Berwick, Australia*

Bernice Redley, PhD

*Centre for Quality and Patient Safety Research, Monash Health Partnership, Deakin University, Burwood, Australia*

Ana Hutchinson, PhD

*Centre for Quality and Patient Safety Research, Epworth Partnership, Deakin University, Burwood, Australia*

#### **Purpose:**

Today, people with intellectual disability (ID) are living longer than ever before, frequently experiencing conditions associated with aging and chronic disease at an early age due to their genetic makeup. People with ID living in specialist disability homes (SDH) are reliant on disability care workers (DCW) to provide care and advocacy during episodes of illness. However, during episodes of acute illness, people with ID are at high risk of receiving poor quality healthcare or care not suited to their specific needs. People with ID are high users of hospital emergency department and inpatient services for health problems that may be prevented or treated within the community. Monash Health residential in-reach services, in Victoria, Australia provides a novel service to deliver acute transient care for people with ID within their SDH during episodes of acute illness. Caregivers' experiences of providing this service has not been investigated.

The purpose of this research was to inform strategies to support in-reach services to meet healthcare needs, during episodes of inter-current illness, for people with ID living in GH. The primary aim was to explore and describe the perspectives, experiences and practices of DCW and in-reach service Registered Nurses (RN) when providing healthcare during inter-current illness for people with ID living in SDH.

#### **Methods:**

A qualitative exploratory case study research design was used. Participants included a convenience sample of three DCW and four in-reach service RNs with experience of providing healthcare during episodes of acute inter-current illness for people with ID living in SDH. Data were collected via in-depth interviews using three case-study vignettes as a tool to explore and describe the experiences of participants.

#### **Results:**

The findings of this study demonstrate that in-reach services can support clients and DCW by providing prompt access to clinical expertise in the assessment and treatment of inter-current illness within the SDH setting. This may in turn improve client outcomes and decrease transfers to emergency departments and hospital care. However, the scope of DCW practice and the SDH care setting place limitations on the type of acute care services that can and should be provided to clients with ID within this setting. Additionally, this study found that there was scope to increase access, and improve coordination of primary and community care services to support DCW and clients in the management of complex healthcare needs. Effective coordination of medical and supportive care services has the potential to allow clients to continue to live in their choice of community residence for a longer period of time.

#### **Conclusion:**

This research supports a conceptual understanding of the role of a DCW in SDH setting and their role in the management of episodes of acute inter-current illness in SDH has been developed. The outcomes of this study demonstrate that in-reach services can play an important role in supporting clients and DCW in SDH setting. A gap was identified in the effective coordination of primary care and acute care services for individuals with ID. Importantly, the emphasis needs to remain on the delivery of person-centered care, to ensure that the best health care outcomes for people with ID can be achieved, while ensuring that their preferences and choices for type and location of care delivery are respected.

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**Keywords:**

Acute Illness, Intellectual disability and Residential Care

**References:**

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**Abstract Summary:**

Hospital residential care in-reach services to provide episodic acute care during inter-current illness for people with intellectual disability living in Specialist Disability Homes is novel and has unique challenges. This study examined the experience of Disability Care Workers and In-reach Nurses to inform future enhancement of this service.

**Content Outline:**

1. Introduction
  - o The problem of aging in disability in people with disability
  - o The problem of acute episodic illness in Specialist Disability Homes
  - o The role of Inreach service to provide acute care in for people with intellectual disability
  - o Specific aims
2. Research design
  - o The research design, methods and data collection
1. Research Findings
  - o Inreach can make a difference

- Pulling services together around the person
- Real time access
- 2. Conclusion
  - Contribution to nursing practice and scholarship
  - Implications for clinical practice
  - Future research

First Primary Presenting Author

***Primary Presenting Author***

Sarah Sami, MNP  
 Monash Health and Deakin University  
 Residentail Inreach  
 Registered Nurse  
 Berwick  
 Australia

**Professional Experience:** Acute general medical nursing, diabetes nurse educator and community aged care nurse. Has worked in Residential Inreach service at Monash Health for 7 years. Sarah completed this research during her Master research program

**Author Summary:** Sarah is an Acute general medical nurse, diabetes nurse educator and community aged care nurse. She has worked in Residential Inreach service at Monash Health for 7 years. Sarah completed this research during her Master research program. This is her first international nursing conference presentation.

Second Secondary Presenting Author

***Corresponding Secondary Presenting Author***

Bernice Redley, PhD

Deakin University  
 Centre for Quality and Patient Safety Research, Monash Health Partnership  
 Associate Professor  
 Burwood  
 Australia

**Professional Experience:** Associate Professor Bernice Redley has over 30 years' experience as a nurse working in acute, emergency, clinical, academic and government health and care settings. Her research addresses complex problems in acute clinical practice settings including interprofessional teamwork and clinical communication, preventing harm during hospitalisation, and information technology solutions to support communication and acute care delivery.

**Author Summary:** Associate Professor Bernice Redley has over 30 years' experience as a nurse working in acute, emergency, clinical, academic and government health and care settings. She has presented at many nursing conferences during her academic career spanning 15 years.

Third Author

Ana Hutchinson, PhD

Deakin University  
 Centre for Quality and Patient Safety Research, Epworth Partnership  
 Associate Professor  
 Burwood  
 Australia

**Professional Experience:** Respiratory and aged care nursing across the continuum of care from primary to critical care nursing. Ana Hutchinson completed a PhD developing and evaluating a community based

program for the management of acute respiratory illness in patients with chronic obstructive lung disease.

**Author Summary:** Respiratory and aged care nursing across the continuum of care from primary to critical care nursing. Ana Hutchinson completed a PhD developing and evaluating a community based program for the management of acute respiratory illness in patients with chronic obstructive lung disease.