

PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY



SPOR Evidence Alliance
Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research

Alliance pour des données
probantes de la SRAP
Stratégie de recherche axée sur le patient

Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research

SPOR
Putting Patients First

A Review of Hydration Research in Long-Term Care

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Summary

An in-depth review of fluid intake and hydration in long-term care was done by a team of patient partners, researchers and librarians to look at what programs might best help people to maintain good health.

What does this mean?

Sharing results of this study in person and in writing, increases the awareness of dehydration and brings forward options for people who want to start programs in long-term care.

An important part of this project was to share what we found with people that provide long-term care. Together, we explored real-life ways to use this research to make changes in Yukon care homes.

Acknowledgement:

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What is the current situation?

Research shows that not having enough fluid in your body is a problem for many older people and can cause health problems such as bladder infections, constipation, falls and difficulty thinking clearly.

Providing more fluid for people living in long-term care homes will improve their health, quality of life and save money in the medical system.

What questions did we aim to answer in our research?

There are two aims: 1) To describe the ways to improve hydration in long-term care, and to find out: 2) what are the effects of those different ways?

How did we approach these questions?

This study was suggested and co-led by a member of the public who had been a caregiver to an aunt living in long-term care. When LR got her aunt to drink water, she noticed that her mood, her balance and even her ability to think improved.

Team members found more than 2000 studies. After careful review, 24 studies were included. We looked carefully at each study to see the methods to improve hydration, how these methods worked, to describe the health outcomes measured, and how well each study was done.

What answers did we find from our research?

Some studies reported improvement in the amount of fluid taken or the level of hydration. Many studies could not say for sure that the level of hydration improved. Most studies used more than one method to increase drinking and hydration. We divided the studies into three categories: 1) teaching staff and/or residents 2) posters and other reminders and 3) making fluids easier to get or drink.

Fluid intake was measured and recorded by staff, residents or researchers. Hydration was measured through blood and urine testing or through other signs of dehydration, like dry tongues.

Challenges within these findings?

Many studies used more than one method to improve fluid intake and it was not possible to say which of the methods worked. In many studies, there was no way to tell if measurements and reporting were done correctly.

Some studies were done for a short period or had very few people involved. Only one study was done in Canada; it was in a large city that is very different to the remote nature of Yukon.