



Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra



Residential Aged Care



Illawarra,
New South Wales

Linkage Strategies Used:

Role Clarification



Written and Verbal Communication Pathways



Multidisciplinary Team Structures and Processes



Designated Linkage Workers



Knowledge Exchange and Upskilling



Continuous Quality Improvement



Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra (MACI) is a not-for-profit aged care and retirement service for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The facility provides person-centred care and ensures resident wishes are at the forefront of all palliative care decisions.

The ELDAC Working Together program provided MACI with an opportunity to review its palliative care systems and implement improvements to further support staff and residents.

The facility wanted to expand its capacity to care for residents and avoid unnecessary transfers to hospital. Staff also required further training to confidently discuss end-of-life care with residents and develop advance care plans. Diverse cultural backgrounds meant it was often difficult to initiate these conversations as residents and their families were reluctant to discuss palliative care. Stronger relationships with other service providers in the region were also needed to improve continuity of care and referral pathways.

The dedicated ELDAC facilitator helped MACI develop a more collaborative partnership with local palliative care services by increasing communication and understanding. This mutually-beneficial relationship and associated mentoring by the Specialist Palliative Care Clinical Nurse Consultant, provided valuable support for a range of new initiatives. These have included upskilling of all staff, network building in the Illawarra region, staff support for grief and loss, clinical support and mentoring and, system improvements.

MACI supported its new approach to palliative care by nominating inhouse champions to support their peers and provide high-quality end-of-life care for residents. Additional training and education also increased the facility's capacity and improved staff confidence with increased skills and resources to support their decision-making.

The facility introduced an innovative program to facilitate more comfortable conversations with residents about palliative care. At the 'Dying to Know Café', residents and their families discuss their end-of-life decisions in a relaxed conversational setting. This approach supports resident's choices and has increased the number of advance care plans.

Benefits

- Increased numbers of advance care directives.
- Networks have been strengthened and expanded.
- Upskilling and resources continue to support staff decision-making.
- Residents and their families are more involved in end-of-life care discussions.
- Residents are transferred to hospital less frequently.

“ELDAC enabled us to highlight palliative care and has given us more of a passion to provide appropriate quality care for our residents.”



Testimonial from local palliative care nurse

As a palliative care nurse, I was involved as a stakeholder with Multicultural Village Aged Care Illawarra at Warrawong, NSW and ELDAC.

We introduced an afternoon tea to provide opportunities for small discussions on choices, wishes and living well. We invited a few residents and held what would become our first ‘Dying to Know Café’ in a residential aged care facility. A resident called Dorothy inspired us to try the idea when she mentioned she had difficulty hearing information at a community forum about advance care planning.

MACI organised afternoon tea and we talked about what we hoped would happen as we approach our dying time. Dorothy was calm and wise in her conversation and had obviously thought about this before. Dorothy said she hoped to die at MACI with her family present and with hymns playing. The team spoke to Dorothy’s son and they talked through Dorothy’s advance care planning revisions. Everyone was on the same page including the GP.

A few months later, Dorothy had a change in health and was admitted to hospital. Her advance care directive was clear and respected. Dorothy returned to MACI with the biggest smile on her face and said, “I am home.”

MACI staff were ready to use their skills and expertise, and felt confident in supporting Dorothy. She was

relieved and thrilled to be back at MACI. Generations of her family visited and spent time, having cuppas and keeping her company. Dorothy also wanted her MACI family to be around her. We followed her wishes and residents, kitchen staff, cleaning, administration and care staff said their goodbyes and were able to comfort Dorothy. She was delighted that everyone came to spend time with her. She had no fear facing her end and was at peace. Dorothy died listening to her favourite hymns snuggled in her own bed. I am told it was magical.

Since then, other MACI residents have reviewed their own advance care plans and one resident has written his own eulogy. Several Dying to Know Cafés have also been held in other residential aged care homes and when I am sitting with people talking through their wishes and preferences, I think of Dorothy. I am so glad she was sweet and assertive enough to tell me that she didn’t hear a word I said in the first place! The smaller groups are informal, friendly and intimate. It is because of Dorothy that we run Dying to Know Cafés in residential aged care homes.

I was grateful for the ELDAC facilitation and encouragement, and inspired by the work and commitment of the MACI team to serve their residents with skill and compassion.

Kathleen Wurth, Palliative Care Clinical Nurse Consultant, Palliative Care, Port Kembla