

Strategies to enhance routine physical activity in care home residents: the REACH research programme including a cluster feasibility RCT

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†In memoriam

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Plain English summary

The REACH research programme

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Plain English summary

What was the question?

Research has reported that care home residents are inactive for the majority of their time. This may lead to increased dependency and low mood.

What did we do?

Working with care home staff and residents, we developed and evaluated an approach to enhance physical activity in the daily routines of residents. The work included observations in care homes and interviews with residents, staff and relatives to obtain their views and to gain knowledge of possible barriers. We combined this with evidence to suggest how to increase activity levels. These suggestions were tested out and further developed in four care homes. We produced an intervention called MoveMore for care home staff to use to change routine practice in their homes to help residents increase their physical activity.

We undertook work to see if a large-scale evaluation would be possible. In a trial involving 12 homes, five were chosen at random to receive the new intervention and seven were chosen at random to continue with their usual care. Residents were assessed three times over 9 months.

What did we find?

Only one of the five care homes did not manage to use MoveMore. We were able to recruit the target number of residents and were successful in assessing physical activity by use of activity monitors. Many residents were unable to complete assessment questionnaires, although staff were able to do this for them. There was little difference in the number of falls, hospitalisations and deaths, or in costs between the two groups.

What does this mean?

We were able to develop and implement an intervention to increase physical activity. Further work is required to improve intervention delivery and the assessment of residents before progressing to a large trial.

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