

New report proves postcode healthcare for elderly

New research released today reveals that elderly New Zealanders are being denied the chance to live better and improve their health and well-being simply because of where they live.

“Over half of the country’s DHBs are delaying access to rest homes for older people who need it, and this can have serious consequences for their health”, says Simon Wallace, Chief Executive of the New Zealand Aged Care Association (NZACA).

The report *Caring for our older Kiwis: The right place, at the right time* published by the NZACA and based on more than 300,000 anonymised clinical assessments done throughout New Zealand over the past three years, provides evidence of the benefits of rest home care, but also raises serious concerns about the ability of many elderly people to access care when they need it.

“While the analysis clearly shows the significant benefits of aged residential care for an older person’s health and well-being, it also shows that many elderly people are missing out on improved or stable health because of where they live.” says Mr Wallace.

“Postcode healthcare is simply not acceptable in New Zealand. Our analysis supports the Government’s finding in its inquiry into the aged care sector last year about disparities in care across the regions.

“The aged care sector currently cares for around 36,000 elderly people and the analysis, based on the Government’s mandated assessment tool, shows that rest home care adds huge value to the lives of our elderly people.

“The improvements are significant, with 82% of older people reporting that they no longer feel lonely when they move into care, 74.5% had improved health stability and 62.6% had improved levels of pain.

“However, if an older person lives in the Hawke’s Bay DHB region, for example, and is at the point that they are needing aged residential care, they will wait on average seven months longer to access that care, than someone who lives in neighbouring MidCentral DHB.

“The inconsistent approach taken by too many DHBs in assessing the health needs of elderly people means they miss out on those benefits.

“We are keen to work with the Government to progress their policy that the interRAI assessment tools are applied in a consistent way across all the DHBs so that our elderly people can be treated equally.

“With a rapidly ageing population, the demand for rest home care will only increase, and we must have a policy and funding framework that enables our elderly people to continue to access quality care when they need it - both now and for the future.” says Mr Wallace

The full report *Caring for our older Kiwis: The right place, at the right time* can be downloaded at www.nzaca.org.nz.

ENDS

For further information please contact Bronwynne Howse, 0274 583 198